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THE INDEPENDENT

Friday 26 December 1997 45p (IR50p) No 3,491

Grey's elegy: One Man, favourite for today's running of the King George VI Chase at Kempton Park, on the gallops at Greystoke, Cumbria; *Sport, page 18* Photograph: Brian Harris

A good year...

The Independent's top writers on the moments that made 1997: with Andrew Marr, Donald Macintyre, Suzanne Moore, Polly Toynbee David Aaronovitch, Robert Fisk

PAGES 5-13

Shoppers to pay the price in plans for powerful food-standards agency

Food prices seem set to rise to fund a new agency to be established under government plans to clean up the food industry. Food producers will have to fund some of the agency's costs, with a bill of up to £200m. Our Legal Affairs Correspondent has the details.

EXCLUSIVE BY MICHAEL STREETER

Ministers plan to charge manufacturers for food licences to help pay for the Food Standards Agency and and the implementation of tougher regulations, according to the White Paper establishing the body, a copy of which has been seen by *The Independent*.

The bill to the food industry could be £200m, which will raise fears that prices could have to rise. It will also raise concern that the industry will expect trade-offs for funding the scheme. The leaked White Paper, due to be published in November but delayed to next month, also proposes a new advisory committee on animal feed. It is intended to meet concern over the use of genetically altered feed such as maize given to animals and its affects on human health.

The document, marked "final draft", contains wide powers for the agency, including a key role in identifying and recommending balanced and nutritious diets for the general public. Overall, the proposals will create one of the most powerful food watchdogs in Europe. The White Paper is thought to have been delayed after intervention by the Minister without Portfolio, Peter Mandelson, apparently echoing fears by the food industry that emphasis on nutrition would deflect the agency from its other tasks.

The "final draft" says the agency, to be created by 1999, should play a "key role" in developing nutrition policy. In particular, it should help provide the definition of a "healthy diet", and propose laws on nutritional aspects of food, including "labelling and claims, dietary supplements sold as food, fortified foods and functional foods". Critics are watching to see if the proposals are watered down. The Health Department has lobbied hard to keep control over nutrition policy.

But it is clear the food industry will be dismayed by the plan to charge them for food licences to fund many of the White Paper's objectives. In a key passage, the document says "... the Government believes the food industry should bear the bulk of the costs of improving food safety and standards. The food industry as a whole will benefit from the improved public confidence in food safety and standards that the FSA is likely to bring". The best way of achieving this is a "comprehensive system of licensing with charges", it says.

The White Paper makes big claims for the FSA, which will be based in Whitehall and divided into a commission and an executive arm called the agency, modelled on proposals by Professor Philip James in his 8 May report. In his draft preface, the Prime Minister says the plans will "transform" the way food-standard issues are handled, and promises to do away with the "old climate of secrecy and suspicion".

A key part of the paper allows the agency, which will be responsible to the Department of Health, to publish not just its decisions but evidence on why they are made. It will operate under "guiding principles" including protecting public health in food and the need for unbiased assessments.

A controversial guideline is the requirement that the agency's actions on food health are "proportionate" to the risk and take into account the likely cost to industry and consumers. The Consumers Association believes such "political" judgements should be left just to ministers.

The crucial part of the proposals is the separation of food production issues, which will be retained by the Ministry of Agriculture (MAFF), and food consumer protection, which will pass to the agency. The two were seen as conflicting interests, a factor exposed in recent food crises such as the salmonella eggs scare and BSE.

The agency, whose annual expenditure will be more than £100m, will take over the role of advising ministers on policy and the need for new laws in areas such as food safety, food standards and public information and education on food-related matters.

A Health Department source said there have been battles in MAFF over which powers it will retain. The agency will be given the power to intervene legally - under existing or new powers in the 1990 Food Safety Act - in farming practices where these affect food safety. This will ensure it can operate across the whole food chain, from "plough to plate", says the White Paper.

Critics will doubt whether the agency will be given the resources and have the motivation to intervene effectively in what will remain MAFF's main area of responsibility. The agency, which will have the power and funds to commission research, will also have a "major strategic role" in developing a national strategy on the control of animal pathogens - which can cause disease in humans - in the food chain.

The Consumers Association said it broadly backed plans for the FSA, but was concerned about industry funding it.

Just what you need for a Christmas break: Mediterranean sunshine.

There you are, feeling anything but Christmassy. Rain lashing down. Wind howling. Snow forecast. Then a friend hands you a glass of wine that shimmers in the firelight like sun on the water at St Tropez. James Herrick Chardonnay may not *sound* Mediterranean but as you raise the glass there's a rush of citrus and spice like the Mistral in your face. Then follows a flavour-tour of the South of France - wild thyme, vanilla, cloves, gooseberry, lemon, lime - till you can feel the warmth on your back and the blue Mediterranean between your toes. Stay awhile. Have another glass.

James Herrick CHARDONNAY 1996 VIN DE PAYS D'OC

James Herrick CHARDONNAY

THE PICK OF THE SOUTH OF FRANCE

AVAILABLE COUNTRYWIDE FROM SUPERMARKETS, SPECIALIST CHAINS AND MAJOR INDEPENDENT WINE MERCHANTS

TODAY'S NEWS

Queen breaks tradition with personal message

The Queen broke with the tradition of her Christmas broadcast with a relaxed and surprisingly personal message to the nation. She paid homage to Diana, Princess of Wales, and there was prolonged footage of the public grief which followed the Princess's death and the funeral. Quoting William Blake about how the "silken twine" of joy which can accompany woe, she also described the happiness surrounding her 50th wedding anniversary celebrations. **Page 3**

Woody Allen on honeymoon

Woody Allen is spending Christmas on honeymoon with his new bride in Paris. Yesterday he posed for pictures with Soon-Yi Previn, the adopted daughter of his former partner Mia Farrow. Although his liaison with Soon-Yi had come in for some strong criticism in the US, he has received a comparatively sympathetic reception in France. **Page 4**

Gales lash Britain

The country was hit by storms of up to 90 miles per hour yesterday. Three people were killed and tens of thousands had to endure Christmas Day without electricity, or heating. **Weather forecast, page 2**

Web address: http://www.independent.co.uk

52

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Cold comfort Britain as gales cut power

Tens of thousands of people endured a Christmas without electricity after gale-force winds lashed the country, bringing down power lines. As *Kathy Marks* reports, engineers battled against time to restore supplies before storms struck again.

For householders dependent on electricity, it was a truly miserable day. No heating, no lights, no television, and no way of cooking the Christmas turkey.

North Wales, north-west England and Ireland took the worst battering from winds which gusted to 90mph, leaving a trail of devastation. Three people died in the storms, which swept in from the Atlantic late on Christmas Eve, ripping tiles from roofs and causing havoc on the roads.

The electricity companies called in all their emergency staff, but more than 20,000 homes remained blacked out yesterday afternoon. Scores of roads and railway lines around the country were blocked by fallen trees and chunks of masonry. As clean-up operations began in the North, high winds moved into southern and western England.

During the overnight storms, police in Merseyside received thousands of emergency calls and one council on the Wirral peninsula, where falling trees caused two serious road accidents, declared a local emergency.

In one accident, a 32-year-old woman from Stoke-on-Trent, who was visiting friends in the Wirral, was killed when a tree crushed her car. Another woman died and her passenger was injured in a collision with another vehicle in the Penny Lane area of Liverpool. In the Irish Republic, a man died and his brother was injured in County Kerry when a wall collapsed, trapping them under rubble.

On the M53 motorway in the Wirral, an ambulance carrying a kidney to hospital for a transplant was involved in a 10-vehicle pile-up after a tree fell on to the carriageway. Four people were injured. Inspector Colin Davidson, of Merseyside Police, said it was "like the Wild West" in the area at the height of the storm.

Hundreds of trees and lampposts were flattened across Wales, Lancashire, Cumbria, Derbyshire and County Durham. The old Severn bridge at Avonmouth was closed, as was the QEII bridge near Dartford, which links Kent and Essex. Part of the A66 was shut after two lorries were overturned by the winds.

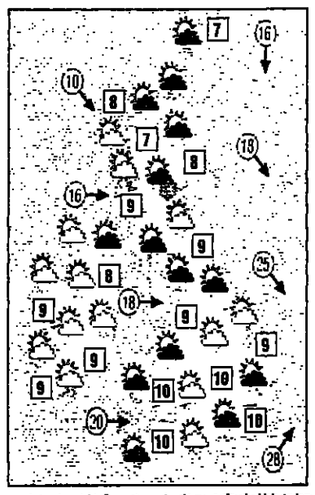
In Nottinghamshire, 30 families were moved from their homes after a boilerhouse chimney began leaning in 70mph gusts. In Cardiff, a man died after climbing on to a bridge and falling into the River Taff.

Some 120,000 homes were blacked out in the Irish Republic, where residents also had to contend with the loss of cable television.

Winter fuel: Five-year-old Gemma Hurrel clings to a hot water bottle during Christmas morning service at St John the Baptist church in Hoxton, east London, where churchgoers are being provided with the winter warmers until a new central heating system is installed Photograph: Rui Xavier

WEATHER

The British Isles, noon today



General summary and outlook
England and Wales will have a colder but brighter day with rain soon clearing the east to leave sunny spells and showers. The worst of the showers will be in the north and west with the best of the sunny periods in the south and east during the afternoon. Northern Ireland and western Scotland will be chilly and breezy with sunny intervals and sudden heavy showers, which will turn wintry on the hills. Eastern Scotland may start dull and damp but it should brighten up later with just the odd shower.
Saturday will start off chilly everywhere and it will feel quite cool. However, strong winds will continue to decrease. In the south and east some places will escape with a dry day and some reasonably long spells of sunshine but there will be further showers in the north and west, some of them quite heavy. On Sunday most areas will be dry for a while but more rain will start to move in from the south-west later as the wind increases. Monday will be wet with some heavy rain.

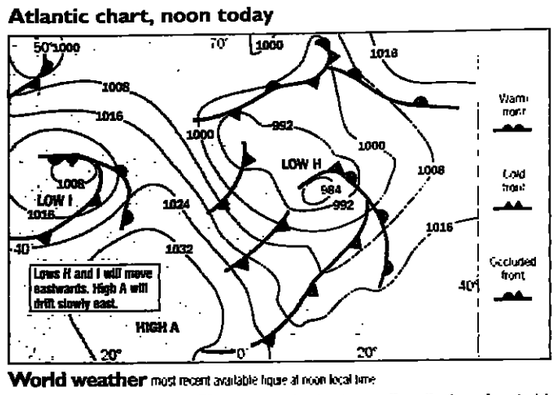
most recent available figure at noon local time c.cloudy; f.fair; fg.fog; hz.hazy; m.mist; r.rain; sn.snow; s.sunny; th.thunder

Aberdeen	C	5	41	Cardiff	R	12	54	Inverness	C	5	41
Anglesey	R	11	52	Carlisle	C	9	48	Ipswich	R	12	54
Ayr	C	9	48	Cork	F	9	48	Isles of Scilly	C	14	57
Belfast	R	9	48	Dover	R	12	54	Jersey	R	12	54
Birmingham	R	13	55	Dublin	Dr	11	52	Liverpool	R	9	48
Blackpool	R	9	48	Edinburgh	C	7	45	London	R	13	55
Bournemouth	R	12	54	Exeter	R	14	57	Manchester	R	10	50
Brighton	R	13	55	Glasgow	C	7	45	Newcastle	R	7	45
Bristol	R	12	54	Guernsey	R	12	54	Nottingham	R	9	48

Oxford	R	13	55	Athens	S	14	57	Florence	S	10	50
Plymouth	R	13	55	Auckland	F	25	77	Frankfurt	C	8	46
Scarborough	C	8	46	B. Aires	F	24	75	Geneva	C	9	48
Shrewsbury	R	10	50	Bangkok	C	33	91	Gibraltar	F	16	61
Southampton	R	13	55	Barcelona	M	13	55	Helsinki	C	-3	27
Southend	R	12	54	Beirut	F	18	64	Hong Kong	C	18	64
St Andrews	Sh	7	45	Belgrade	C	5	41	Istanbul	C	9	48
Stornoway	Sh	7	45	Berlin	C	2	36	Jerusalem	F	19	66
York	R	7	45	Bombay	S	29	84	Jo'burg	R	14	57
				Brussels	C	13	55	Larnaca	F	17	63
				Budapest	S	5	41	Lisbon	Fg	11	52
				Cairo	F	20	68	Los Angeles	S	16	61
				Cape Town	F	23	73	Madrid	M	6	43
				Casablanca	F	18	64	Majorca	F	16	61
				Christchurch	S	23	73	Malta	R	17	63
				Copenhagen	R	2	36	Melbourne	Dr	19	66
				Corfu	F	15	59	Montreal	S	-3	27
				Dakar	S	28	82	Moscow	Sn	-8	18
				Dhahran	F	21	70	Munich	R	5	41

New York	C	4	39				
Nice	F	13	55				
Nicosia	F	17	63				
Paris	C	13	55				
Prague	R	4	39				
Reykjavik	C	6	43				
Rio de Jan	F	34	93				
Riyadh	C	27	81				
Rome	S	13	55				
Stockholm	Sn	-2	28				
Sydney	F	24	75				
Tenerife	S	24	75				
Tokyo	C	9	48				
Venice	M	7	45				
Vienna	C	6	43				
Warsaw	M	2	36				
Washington	C	6	43				
Wellington	C	21	70				
Zurich	F	7	45				

Atlantic chart, noon today



World weather most recent available figure at noon local time

AA Roadwatch

London A1 between Watford Way, Mill Hill Circus and Freeways Corner. Carriageway reduced to two lanes for long term roadworks. Until 31st May 1998

West Yorkshire, M1 J43-J42 Stourton to Lofthouse (M62). A contraflow and a 50mph speed limit are in place. Until 13th July 1998

Somerset, M5 J22-23 Highbridge to Bridgewater. Major roadworks due to bridge repairs. A 3 mile contraflow is in place. Until 31st March 1998

West Midlands, M6 J6 Birmingham. Long-term roadworks. Northbound entry slip to the M6 North closed at Salford Circus. Diversions in place

West Yorkshire, M1 J43-J42 Stourton to Lofthouse (M62) Contraflow and speed limit are in place. Until Jan 21 1998

Greater Manchester A56, Old Trafford. Roadworks. Until 19th January 1998.

London A3211 Blackfriars Underpass. Contraflow. Until 15th April 1998

Bristol M5 J18-19 Contraflow in operation across the Avonmouth Bridge with a 50mph speed limit. Regular rush-hour delays. Until 1st January 1999

Kent M2 J1 Rochester Roadworks with various lane closures. Until January 1999

Kent M2 J5-7 Sittingbourne to Brenley Corner. Lane closures. Until March 1998

Out and about with AA Roadwatch call **0336 401** for the latest local and national traffic news. Source: The Automobile Association. Calls charged at 39p per min (cheap rate) 49p per min (all other times). mc 941

Lighting-up times

Today			Tomorrow		
Belfast	16.03	to 8.46	Belfast	16.04	to 8.46
Birmingham	15.58	to 8.18	Birmingham	15.59	to 8.18
Bristol	16.07	to 8.15	Bristol	16.07	to 8.15
Glasgow	15.48	to 8.48	Glasgow	15.49	to 8.48
London	15.57	to 8.06	London	15.57	to 8.06
Manchester	15.54	to 8.25	Manchester	15.55	to 8.25
Newcastle	15.43	to 8.31	Newcastle	15.44	to 8.31

Air quality

Yesterday's readings	NO2	SO2	Outlook for today	NO2	SO2
London	Good	Good	London	Good	Good
S England	Good	Good	S England	Good	Good
Wales	Good	Good	Wales	Good	Good
C England	Good	Good	C England	Good	Good
N England	Good	Good	N England	Good	Good
Scotland	Good	Good	Scotland	Good	Good
N Ireland	Good	Good	N Ireland	Good	Good

High tides

	AM	HT	PM	HT
London	11:07	6.0	23:35	6.3
Liverpool	8:39	8.1	21:00	8.2
Avonmouth	4:18	10.8	16:39	11.2
Hull (Albert Dock)	3:29	7.5	16:01	7.6
Greenock	10:23	3.1	22:22	3.0
Dun Laoghaire	9:10	3.6	21:30	3.6

Sun and moon

Sun rises: 8.06
Sun sets: 15.57

Moon rises: 4.15
Moon sets: 14.05

New moon: Dec 29

Icy ordeal for British officers

Three British Merchant Marine officers were safe after falling overboard into freezing waters in New York's Hudson River after a safety exercise went wrong. The men, with three Indonesian crew-members, were on a lifeboat on board the cruise ship *Edinburgh Castle* when it fell overboard. — *Kim Sengupta*

Women in financial control

The notion that men wear the financial trousers has been undermined by a new survey by Cornhill Life. Just 14 per cent of women left decisions about savings schemes to their male partners, while 40 per cent said they made the decisions themselves without any consultation. However, the majority of women complained of insufficient information aimed at them. — *Kim Sengupta*

Road-rage victim seriously ill

A woman, 20, was in a critical condition in hospital with head injuries after an alleged road-rage attack in Pembroke on Christmas Eve. Police were questioning three men. — *Kim Sengupta*

Chris Evans has a £100 lie-in

Chris Evans, the disc-jockey and new head of Virgin Radio, failed to turn up for a live interview on Sky News yesterday morning and lost a £100 bet. Evans recently bought a controlling interest in the station from Richard Branson for £80m. — *Kim Sengupta*

CONTENTS

7.30 FOR 8 — by Chris Priestley

ZITS — by Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

The John Lewis Clearance.
It's like a sale, only better.

FIRST DAY MONDAY AT PETER JONES Sloane Square JOHN LEWIS OXFORD STREET, BRENT CROSS, ABERDEEN CHEADLE EDINBURGH HIGH WYCOMBE FIRST DAY TUESDAY AT JOHN LEWIS BRISTOL KINGSTON, MILTON KEYNES, PETERBOROUGH WELWYN BAINBRIDGE - Newcastle BOND'S - Norwich, CALEY'S - Windsor, COLE BROTHERS - Sheffield HEELAS - Reading JESSOP & SON - Nottingham KNIGHT & LEE - Southsea, GEORGE HENRY LEE - Liverpool, ROBERT SAYLE - Cambridge, TREWIN'S - Watford, TYRRELL & GREEN, Southampton

At John Lewis Department Stores, even during a clearance, it's business as usual. For instance, our pricing policy, summed up by 'Never Knowingly Undersold', means that if we find a local retailer offering the same goods at a lower price, we will reduce ours accordingly, even if their goods are in a sale. We still deliver free across a wide area. And whatever you buy, you can return it if you are not completely satisfied. The John Lewis Clearance. It's better than a sale.

JOHN LEWIS
Department Stores

Queen's message breaks tradition

For the Queen, it has been a year of grief and great happiness, she told the nation yesterday in her Christmas Day message. *Kathy Marks* says the intensely personal tone of the broadcast marked a significant break with tradition.

Finally, it seems, the Queen is in tune with the popular mood. If there was one thing her subjects wished to hear in the Christmas broadcast, it was a display of emotion about Diana, Princess of Wales. And there it was, right at the start of her message.

Westminster Abbey, she said, had been the setting this year for both Diana's funeral and her own 50th wedding anniversary celebration, two events, "one of them almost unbearably sad, and one, for Prince Philip and me, tremendously happy".

Quoting from William Blake about the "silken twine" of joy that often accompanies woe, she said: "This interweaving of joy and woe has been very much brought home to me and my family during the last months. We all felt the shock and sorrow of Diana's death." It was a more relaxed Queen who spoke yesterday, an indication that she has taken to heart the calls after the Princess's death for a modern monarchy, more accessible to the people.

The broadcast marked a departure in other ways too. Produced for the first time by ITN instead of the BBC, it was in documentary format, with the Queen's words intercut with footage from the funeral, royal visits and the Commonwealth summit in Edinburgh.

At nine minutes and 55 seconds, it was the longest royal Christmas message since George V began the tradition in 1932, and it was also the first to be on the Internet.

The Queen remarked on the flowers and condolences left in tribute to Diana and said they had been "a great comfort to all those close to her". As she spoke, scenes from the funeral were shown, including a shot of Prince Harry, his face crumpled in grief.

The Queen came close to endorsing devolution for Scotland and Wales, while expressing confidence that the Kingdom remained united. It was her first opportunity to address the nation since she appeared on television a week after the Princess's death in response to disquiet at the royal silence amid outpourings of grief.

Part of the broadcast was filmed at Windsor Castle, where the Queen showed restoration work on St George's Hall, ravaged by fire five years ago.

It finished on another personal note. "Christmas reaffirms that God is with us today," the Queen said. "But, as I have discovered myself afresh this year, he is always present in the kindness shown by our neighbours and in the love of our friends and family."

In his Christmas Day sermon at Canterbury Cathedral, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, made a plea for a more caring society, but said it was only attainable if the worth of every individual was recognised. Dr Carey said God was "still with us". He went on: "Not absent from the poor, the broken-hearted, the refugee and the homeless. Not absent from the single mother, the person living on the breadline and the unemployed teenager."

He added that Christmas "asserts the importance of family life and living in community with each other".

A woman reaches her hand up to touch an icon of Mary and baby Jesus at the Church of the Nativity, in the West Bank town of Bethlehem Photograph: AP

Bargains galore as stores offload surplus stock

Fashions, shoes and china will be offered at up to 50 per cent discount tomorrow as stores struggle to offload huge quantities of surplus stock built up before Christmas. Some retailers are describing the reductions as the cheapest post-Christmas sales to date.

Despite record amounts spent on gifts such as perfume, accessories and CDs, fashion and shoe retailers will be offering unprecedented bargains after they suffered disappointing levels of pre-Christmas business.

Ron Woodman, marketing director of the Metro Centre in Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, said: "In fashion, there has probably not been a bigger sale with this level of price cuts. It is predominantly going to be a fashion-driven sale."

The Centre for Economic Business Research estimates that up to £6.7bn could be spent in the non-food sector in the January sales, 9 per cent up on last year.

Retailers were hit hard before Christmas by mild weather of around 9C, which severely curtailed the appeal of winter clothes and footwear.

Chris Fear, marketing director of Lakeside shopping centre in Thurrock, Essex, said: "We expect 50 per cent off many fashion items. People have been holding off and waiting until the sales to buy. The money is there, so this coming Saturday the advice is: get out there early."

An example of the bargains available in footwear is a pair of Russell & Bromley knee-length velvet boots which have been reduced from £225 to £95. A pair of shoes which normally sells there for £120 will be offered for £29.

Prices for household goods have also been sharply cut. St George curtains which before Christmas cost £119 at John Lewis will now be £69. Similarly, china pottery is on sale at less than 65 per cent of full price.

Retailers have complained of sluggish sales, and stores such as House of Fraser began their January discounts last weekend. Sales are have been under way nation-wide at Laura Ashley, Warehouse, Dolcis and Ravel since before Christmas.

Out-of-town shopping centres have benefited at the expense of high streets. A record 130,000 customers a day spent an average of £96 each at the Metro Centre, compared with £63 last year.

— Andrew Verity

Sale guide, pages 14 and 15

Cubans have their first Christmas for 30 years

Christmas came to Havana yesterday for the first time in decades. Cubans were given the day off ahead of the Pope's forthcoming visit. Agencies report.

As church bells rang across Havana, more than 1,000 people crowded into the city's cathedral on Christmas Eve to give thanks for the first government-sanctioned Christmas in nearly 30 years.

Cardinal Jaime Ortega said that Roman Catholics never ceased to attend Christmas Mass under Fidel Castro's Communist government. But this year, with Pope John Paul II arriving for a visit next month, Christmas Eve celebrations are extra special. In honour of the visit, Mr Castro declared Christmas Day – for this year – an official holiday.

The holiday season has taken on a special meaning for Cubans. Christmas trees and other holiday items sold out weeks ago. Despite a severe economic crisis, families scraped together enough money to buy the pork roast, apple cider and other special foods for a traditional holiday meal.

"We have always done something special for Christmas Eve, even if it was just fried eggs," said Yaneysi Rodriguez, 28, who sold mandarin oranges measured out on a large rusty scale. "But this year we are going to have a big dinner with pork leg."

Cuba became officially atheist three years after the 1959 revolution that brought Castro to power and Christmas as an official holiday disappeared in 1969. Castro relented only because of the Pope's visit.

In Rome, the Pope spoke of the universal joy of the holiday. His Christmas wish: "Peace to humanity." The 77-year-old Polish Pontiff appeared tired as he read his address and later wished the world a Happy Christmas in 56 languages. He spoke of the plight of refugees, the homeless, immigrants and the unemployed, focusing on the plight of the poor in advanced nations.

In Bethlehem, workers picked up litter in Manger Square from thousands of pilgrims and Palestinians on Christmas Eve. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat told worshippers at an Anglican service held in a courtyard near the Church of the Nativity that "there will be peace in the land". But there was also bitterness in the air. Suha Arafat, the President's wife, claimed Israel had intentionally blocked tourists from entering Bethlehem. "It is ... an attempt to stop the celebrations and to destroy the Palestinian dream," she said, "Every year we try to make the celebrations better but every year Israel tries to destroy our efforts."

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1000mm Hi-Line Base Unit x 2 ■ 1000mm Drawer Line Base Unit x 1 ■ 600mm Drawer Line Base Unit x 1 ■ 600mm Built Under Oven Housing Unit x 1 ■ 1000mm Full Height Wall Unit x 2 ■ 600mm Hob Wall Unit x 1

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PACKAGE AXA9311/2
SALE PACKAGE PRICE £499 Was £619 SAVE £120
AEG Electric Single Oven AEG3311/21 Mocca/White Was £389 ..... £349
AEG Gas Hob AEG1119/29 Mocca/White Was £159 ..... £135
AEG 60cm Cooker Hood AEG2115/25 Mocca/White Was £89 ..... £65

MFI home works

HOLIDAY SHOPPING HOURS: Boxing Day Friday 26th December 9-6, Saturday 9-6, Sunday 11-5, Monday 9-8, Tuesday 9-6, Wednesday New Year's Eve 9-5, Thursday New Year's Day 10-6, Scottish stores closed New Year's Day. Northern Ireland exceptions: Sunday 1-6, Monday 9-6.

FOR YOUR NEAREST STORE PHONE SCOOT 0800 192 192

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*FOR EXAMPLE THE ABOVE COMPLETE KITCHEN COMPRISES: 8 CABINETS: 600mm Base Under Oven Housing Unit x 1, 600mm Drawer Line Base Unit x 1, 1000mm Hi-Line Base Unit x 2, 1000mm Drawer Line Base Unit x 1, 600mm Hob Wall Unit x 1, 1000mm Full Height Wall Unit x 2. ACCESSORIES: Cornice, Plinth, Base End Panel x 2, Corbels x 2, Wall End Panel x 4, Standard Decor Door x 1. APPLIANCES: AEG Gas Hob AEG1119/29, Integrated Dishwasher APL8214/24. PRICE INFORMATION: Offers and prices are for [illegible] ACCESSORIES and accessories in hand, including ornaments, crockery, cutlery and accessories etc. Fitted rack etc. are available as optional extras. All items subject to availability. Subject to terms and conditions of trading. See in store for details.

Woody weds Mia's adopted daughter

Three uncharacteristic things happened to Woody Allen this Christmas. He left Manhattan. He had paparazzi chasing him around some of Europe's best-known luxury hotels. And he chose to honour his latest long-standing romantic liaison with a wedding ceremony.

The news editors and columnists of the New York tabloids may have poured scorn and moral opprobrium on him five years ago when he first started going out with Soon-Yi, the adoptive daughter of his then consort Mia Farrow. But they were uttering blessings at the very mention of his name this Christmas for providing them with the one thing they cannot usually get at this time of year: a half-decent story.

Woody and Soon-Yi tied the knot in Venice in a ceremony so discreet that nobody realised it was happening until it was long over. There was no big party, no designer clothing, and absolutely no sign of the bride's mother. It was the mayor of Venice, Massimo Cacciari, who let the cat out of the bag at lunchtime on Christmas Eve. "I married them at five o'clock yesterday afternoon," he said. "There's no point keeping it secret any longer."

There followed a rather ridiculous chase along the canals and footbridges of Venice to track down the newlyweds. The television cameras caught up with them, walking arm in arm near their hotel, the Gritti Palace. "I have no comment to make," said a clearly bewildered, pale-faced Allen. "I'm happy to be in Venice." Actually, the 62-year-old director did not look happy at all. His new bride, 35 years his junior, managed a smile but said nothing.

A few hours later, the couple had vanished and the press circus moved on to Paris where it was rumoured they had flown to spend Christmas Day. Sure enough, they had checked into the Ritz. It was pretty slim pickings for the press pack, though, who caught a brief glimpse of Woody disappearing under his bodyguard's armpit and little else.

It was paradoxical that a man accused of cradle-snatching when he first starting dating Soon-Yi in 1992 should now be put under the media spotlight for doing something as respectable and conventional as getting married. Admittedly, this was a unusual step for him; although he spent several years living and working with Diane Keaton, and several more with Farrow, he did not marry either of them.

This was the biggest media event for Allen since his acrimonious split with Farrow and the ensuing legal tussles over custody of their children. He did not look like a man who had learnt to take it all in his stride. In recent years he has been spending more and more time in Europe, filming in Paris, Venice and Taormina in Sicily. He has a special fondness for Venice, partly because he has always been well received at the city's annual film festival. Last year, he even took star billing in a jazz concert staged to raise money for the burned out opera house, La Fenice. In the past he has only consented to play his clarinet on Monday nights at his favourite New York jazz club.

— Andrew Gumble

Allen kissing Soon-Yi for the cameras in Paris yesterday — Photograph: Michel Euler

German charged in Israel over suicide bomb plot

A 26-year-old German convert to Islam was charged in Tel Aviv yesterday with planning to blow himself up in a crowded Israeli street. He would have been the first European suicide in a bombing campaign which has claimed 21 Israeli lives since July.

Stefan Smirak, a Christian by birth, is alleged to have joined the Hizbollah Shia militia during a visit to Lebanon this autumn. Israel's Shin Bet internal-security service was waiting for him when he landed at Ben-Gurion airport on 28 November.

According to a police spokesman, Hizbollah trained him to handle weapons and explosives, then sent him home to Germany to get a new passport with no Lebanese stamps. From there he flew to Israel with orders to film potential targets in Tel Aviv and Haifa. After that he was supposed to go to Turkey, where a Hizbollah agent would instruct him on how to prepare the explosive and where to detonate it. He was picked up before he could carry out his reconnaissance mission.

— Eric Silver, Jerusalem

IMF throws lifeline to Seoul

The IMF moved to shore up South Korea's shattered markets by announcing swift aid disbursements of $10bn (£6.2bn). Seoul said it had agreed to new reforms with the IMF in return for the aid by next month to stabilise its floundering markets. IMF officials on Wednesday said the package should help to keep the country's economic crisis from developing into a "serious" recession. Some analysts have expressed fears of an imminent default on Korea's foreign debt, which the Finance Ministry estimated at $200bn.

— Reuters, Seoul

Clinton pledges homeless $1bn

In a Christmas Eve announcement, President Bill Clinton has pledged to seek $1.15bn in next year's budget to help homeless people get off the streets. "As long as there are children waking up in America on Christmas morning without the comfort of a warm home, we have more work to do," the President said in a statement.

Most of the requested funding would be used for grants to local communities to provide job training for the homeless, child care, treatment for drug and alcohol abuse and mental health services with the aim of accomplishing more than just sheltering the poor. The rest would be for rental assistance vouchers.

— AP, Washington

Kaunda is sent to jail

Police in Zambia have jailed Kenneth Kaunda, the former president, five days after he returned to the country for the first time since an attempted coup.

Aides said the frail 73-year-old "father of the nation", now a vocal opposition leader, had been taken to a notorious and overcrowded remand prison, Kamwala, in the capital Lusaka after being served a police order detaining him for 28 days.

President Frederick Chiluba defeated Mr Kaunda in multi-party elections in 1991.

He imposed a state of emergency on 2 November, after a foiled coup by junior army officers who accused the government of corruption.

— Reuters, Lusaka

Actor Toshiro Mifune dies

Toshiro Mifune, a legend of Japanese cinema and star of such classics as *The Seven Samurai* and *Yojimbo*, died on Wednesday aged 77.

Mifune was an icon of Japanese film, with parts in more than 130 Japanese and English-language movies.

He was best known for rugged and stoic samurai warrior roles under the direction of Akira Kurosawa.

Mifune: Played samurai

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THE INDEPENDENT
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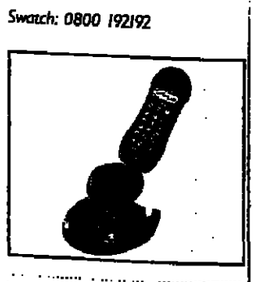

Calls cost 50p per minute at all times. Winner picked at random after lines close 30 December 1997. Usual Newspaper Publishing rules apply. Editor's decision is final.

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THE INDEPENDENT

MOMENTS THAT MADE THE YEAR

FRIDAY 26 DECEMBER 1997

A nation at ease with itself? We're getting there

It has been a good year. Good for Britain and good for most of the world. News is mostly led by bad news. Looking back at *The Independent* during 1997, one finds the whole gamut of human folly and wickedness, in daily instalments: rapes, murders, callous bureaucracy, brutal little wars, child abuse, corruption.

But actually, away from the headlines, the underlying themes we reported and discussed are, when swallowed in retrospective gulps, cheering and positive ones.

Remember, first, that the vast bulk of what mattered in the past 12 months happened privately, in families and companies. We continued to become a richer, better-informed and more secure people. Fine theatre, excellent music, daring fashion and innovative art bubbled up all round the country. Our cities pullulated with energy and self-confidence. Britain became a more cosmopolitan, admired and zippier nation than before. Despite close calls and dark predictions, Northern Ireland continued mostly peaceful.

A cloud over the year, rather bigger than a man's hand, has been global warming and the fears of the effects of climate change. Month after month of weird weather helped keep every thinking citizen at least mildly worried. Around the world, floods, earthquakes, storms and droughts seemed to be more frequent than before. At home, water shortages and changes to our flora and fauna were widely muttered about. At least, although it was a muddled compromise at best, the Kyoto summit saw the beginnings of a world deal. But this is one story that is not going away.

Economically, around the globe, stock markets fell as well as rose. Japan has had a tough year and cannot look forward to 1998 with great bullishness. Korea is in really deep trouble. But overall, trade grew and scores of countries raised themselves another notch from Third-World poverty to First-World affluence.

There were still some brutes and maniacs in charge of individual nations, such as Iraq and Serbia; but less of the world was under brutish or maniacal control in 1997 than in any previous year of world history. Algeria had a year of special horror. From Africa to Russia, there are many examples of misgovernment, corruption and economic foolishness. But more of the world is freer and better-run than before; and some important countries, such as Iran, are slowly rejoining the rest of the world.

Here in Britain, as in other developed countries, we were embroiled in no conflict and became richer. There were the gold-rush stories from the City to the privatised company boardrooms. But leaving them aside, wages rose; unemployment fell; banks and building societies cascaded windfall payments; most house prices rose; and we enjoyed low-inflationary growth. There were fewer coalminers, yes, but many more computer programmers.

Next year will probably be a bit tougher; but a soft economic landing seems likelier than a hard one. The strong pound, which made many people's foreign holidays easier than they would otherwise have been, has produced some export problems, but not of the scale predicted at the time.

As consumers, this was the year many of us bought PCs and joined the Internet.

For huge numbers of people, neither money brokers nor drug dealers, it was also the year when carrying a mobile phone became a habit, became normal. In the year ahead, and the one after that, our televisions will change dramatically, so that we have huge numbers of channels. Digital radio will become a ubiquitous, user-friendly joy. The Net will become much easier to use.

But we have grown richer not just in money or gadgets, but in information. If you could be bothered to, in 1997, you learnt a vast amount of new things about the world and the universe. Images flashing back from the beginning of time; a more sophisticated understanding of the relations between genes and human behaviour; warnings about the asteroid threat and the difficulties of working in space; new information about early man; fresh insights into the effects of the oceans on the climate ... few weeks passed this year when there was not important

BY ANDREW MARR

and interesting information to record. These are things we have reported and discussed, but often on inside pages, in the business section and in supplements. I've tried to bring more of the warp and weft of daily life into the news pages of the paper. I hope this helps explain why.

The other big non-political event that touched the country was the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, in a car crash. It was, of course, a ghastly event, particularly for her children, family and many friends, as well as the millions who worshipped her, in an almost religious fashion, from afar. But the effect of the mourning on the national psyche was enlightening and beneficial. It was a time of national catharsis, when we looked at one another anew and recognised just how much we had changed.

Who is that "we"? The country, after all, was divided. Not everyone was weeping or lighting candles or strewing flowers on the streets of London. Some found the whole thing distasteful and mawkish. But the modes of expression of public grief, emotional, gestural, unashamed, revealed a country much less buttoned-up, formal and reserved than its international image. We are not the country we thought we were. It is almost as if the younger British, in particular, are now "in touch with their emotions", to use the language of pop-psychology. The funeral and the days leading up to it were intense. After them, there was a dramatic drop in the number of people seeking psychiatric help, perhaps because they were calmed and cheered by being part of something bigger than themselves. The aftermath of Diana's death was not all backward-looking sorrow; it had elements of renewal too.

What, though, of the more predictable news agenda, in particular the political scene? Again, the message of 1997 has been mostly good. The revolution in British politics can be overstated.

We have exchanged one decent, liberal-minded prime minister who was struggling with big questions of reform, for another. Tony Blair's problems in trying to reform welfare and keeping up with the rest of the European Union without entering the first phase of monetary union are just the same as John Major. On a smaller scale, he finds himself attacked by the press over ministerial behaviour and by farmers over the continuing beef crisis, just as his predecessor was. The two men are not so ideologically distinct as either would wish us to think. Perhaps Mr Blair is a little more enthusiastic about the Thatcher legacy - certainly, she admires him.

The great difference, and good news for Britain, is that Mr Major commanded an exhausted, divided party which was weak in parliament and running out of time, while Mr Blair has a huge majority, a phalanx of energetic and talented ministers and (by the standards of politics) all the time in the world. He has the support of most of the press. The public finances are relatively strong, and strengthening.

All of this is good news simply because it means he has a far better chance of achieving the necessary modernisation than Mr Major ever did.

Some of that modernising would be anathema to almost any Tory, of course: the constitutional changes – from the steps towards devolution to a serious national debate on voting reform, to the proposed abolition of hereditary peers as political players – are all long-overdue. The seven Blairite months of 1997 did not give us the impression of a government of passionate or particularly well-organised political reformers but still, they have done more reform work already than any other administration since the war. But there will be much more in the year ahead – the detailed legislation setting up the Scottish and Welsh assemblies, and the great debate about London's elected mayor.

What about reform of the welfare state? The cuts to single-parent benefit and possible cuts in disability payments have already caused Mr Blair his hardest moments since taking office.

But no one doubts his iron will on the overarching issue now. In a preview of 1998 recently published by the *Economist*, Chris Patten, one of the Tories' lost leaders, reflected that "Sooner or later, governments will have to make hard choices. When Britain's Labour government, like other centre-left governments, declines to do so, Mr Hague's Tories must have something coherent to say." He was barely in print before he was out of date.

The new government has been less adept at beginning the national debate about welfare reform, and choosing its targets, than you might have expected. At worst, it has seemed harsh. In other areas, it has not yet demonstrated that it can deliver on educational reform, or is wise in picking its friends. But by any standards, it has made a cracking start, perhaps the most exhilaratingly fast-paced political debut from any administration this century.

Adn that's good too. Isn't it? Sometimes it seems that we are a cynical, grumpy nation, loathing our world decline and terminally nostalgic. But looking back at 1997, there is really no excuse for being a whingeing Brit. Overall, this has been a year of very good omens at home and abroad.

At *The Independent*, we have enjoyed ourselves reporting and arguing about them; and we hope you have enjoyed the paper; and we wish you, our readers, a lively, enlightening and lucky year ahead.

Earthquake in Enfield: the night Middle England turned red

No other election, in recent memory, has so quickly spawned its own folklore. *Were you still up for Portillo?* demanded the title of one book. To miss the defining moment when the then defence secretary knew he had been rejected by the electors of Enfield North was to be left woefully out of a rare collective experience, like failing to see a winning goal at a FA Cup Final, only much, much worse. Portillo made an unusually graceful speech after the count. But that wasn't the point.

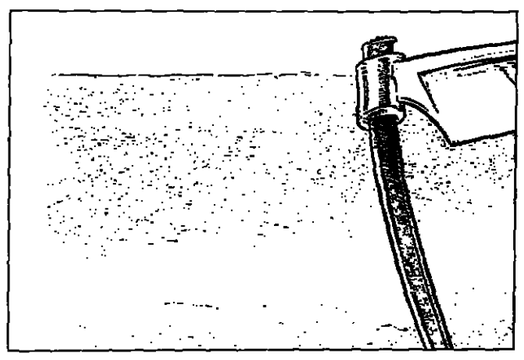
His defeat at super-Tory Enfield North – even for those not gleefully celebrating his demise as a Thatcher heir-apparent – dramatised, as no other result could have done, a landslide on a scale unimaginable when the polls had closed a few hours earlier. It was a few minutes after the Enfield count that, flushed with excitement and scarcely able to absorb the seismic nature of the results across the country, the Blairite intellectual Geoff Mulgan, now on the Downing Street staff, could think of only three words to stammer as he left a BBC party: "This is weird."

He was massively understating the case. The scale of the victory was all the more mysterious because it had, in the end, nothing to do with the previous month's frantic campaigning. The widespread perception among commentators that Labour had fought a brilliantly successful election campaign was shared by the voting public. Thirty-six per cent of voters thought that Labour had fought the most effective campaign, compared with only 11 per cent for the Conservatives, and 13 per cent for the Liberal Democrats. Judged by measurable results this was nonsense. The most striking effect of four weeks of intense electoral activity was precisely the opposite: an actual reduction in Labour's poll lead over the Tories from an impossible 25 points to a still scarcely credible 13.

The roots of those results on that extraordinary night went much, much further back than the campaign itself. Dick Crossman remarked a generation ago that "an election is the end of a long process". The implosion of British Conservatism isn't easy to summarise. The ERM catastrophe had inflicted irreparable damage on the credibility of the John Major government, as the 1967 devaluation had on Wilson's. Privatisation had proved an incontestable success in making efficient the lumbering state industries it replaced. But it also created a hugely enriched superclass, which the public was far less ready to accept.

The electorate wasn't, in the end, prepared to give the credit for an economic recovery to a government which had refused to take the blame for a recession. It was unforgiving about sleaze (drawing an infinitely more sophisticated distinction than the tabloid press had done between financial misdemeanours and sexual heterodoxy). And above all it was repelled by a party ideologically at war with itself, especially on Europe.

But it was still an election won as well as lost. As David Butler and Denis Kavanagh summarised this epochal event in the closing words of their authoritative Nuffield College Study: "The Conservatives, 18 years in power, provided the opportunity. Labour seized it."



BLAIR'S VICTORY
BY DONALD MACINTYRE

That Labour was able to do so was Blair's supreme achievement in opposition. While Neil Kinnock had heroically eliminated the poisonous legacy of the early-Eighties, unscrambling the electorally hopeless positions on Europe, defence and internal democracy, and restored to Labour some of the respectability it had enjoyed in the Seventies, Blair had gone much further. Certainly, Blair was an exceptionally attractive leader. But the party he brought to the election was also transformed: unashamedly embracing Margaret Thatcher's restructuring of the economy. It offered an ideological third way which would seek to heal the social divisions which that restructuring had brought in its wake. Neither old left, went the mantra, nor new right. No longer prepared to tax in order to spend, it also, for the first time in the party's history, promised less than it intended to deliver. And the electorate responded to Blair as it had to Thatcher in 1979, only more so.

The one party that can have truly been said to have benefited from the election campaign itself was the Liberal Democrat Party, which saw its vote share rise to 17 from 13 per cent. One of the peculiar features of the 1997 electorate was its ruthless use of tactical voting. As a result, the Liberal Democrats beat the system they had so long wanted to reform. The third party, with 46 seats, more than in any election since 1929, benefited to an extraordinary degree from the willingness of electors to vote indiscriminately for the anti-Tory candidate. And so did Labour: maybe Blair did "only" secure 44.6 per cent of the vote – more than in any election since 1970, though lower than any between 1945 and 1966. But the total anti-Tory vote of 61.6 per cent blasted all previous 20th-century records.

The scale of this defeat brought in its wake potential problems as well as untold advantages for Labour. Vigorous opposition and narrow majorities can be tough disciplinarians. The fact that Blair is confronting neither may have played a modest part in the revolt this month over the badly-managed cuts in lone-parent benefit. But those cuts are a harbinger for perhaps his toughest task. Welfare reform, while explicitly foreshadowed in the manifesto, was least discussed in detail before or during the election. Which is one reason why, as shown by the David Blunkett letter leaked last weekend, Cabinet ministers are agonising about some of it now. The ending of free university tuition – a hard choice managed with outstanding skill by that same David Blunkett – and the switch from legal aid to no-win no-fee lawyers' services, are both aspects of of welfare reform. But it also means a more far-reaching attempt than the Tories would have dared, to end the dependency culture and replace it with one of work; to lift the aspirations of those trapped in cut-off, no-hope estates, to target benefits to those who need them and reduce them for those who don't; and in the process find more money for education and health. Blair shows no sign of being diverted from this task; those who try to thwart him from the backbenches may have to face the consequences.

And he has the room to drive through the most ambitious programme of constitutional reform this century: to take just one example, the reform of the Lords which ran into the ground in the Sixties, is now, if not easy, attainable. On education and health, on youth justice, on the minimum wage, he has already begun to redeem his promises. But winning as new Labour means governing as new Labour. The one heresy he will never accept is the one that says since he won so massively it wasn't therefore necessary to transform the party as far as he did.

Don't be scared of the nanny instinct; it means well

THE NEW PURITANISM
BY POLLY TOYNBEE

Has this year seen the dawn of a frightening new puritanism? If the Tories weren't dead in the water, drowned rats that have lost the will to swim, they could now be launching a good new line of attack on Labour. They would stride out bearing libertarian banners, commandeering that infinitely versatile word "freedom". It might prise open a promising new vulnerable point on one of Labour's flanks.

This is how the Tory offensive would look: within months of coming into office, the Government has set about banning, stopping and disapproving of things. It is invading the citizen's private space, making bossy decisions on our behalf, officiously telling people what to do.

With subtle hints, the Tories could suggest this is a lingering hangover from the Communist command-economy mentality, an inevitable residue of years of socialism. Get the State Out of Our Hair! William Hague might proclaim (if he had any).

Beef is the most recent libertarian beef. How dare the Government ban beef on the bone because of a one in 600 million risk? I find the right's obsession with beef-eating fascinating. Personally, I couldn't care less if I never ate a rib of beef again. There's plenty of other meat to be had. But beef symbolism – all red-blooded Bluff King Hal, Old England, Hearts of Oak – seems to strike some raw nerves (or ganglions) with them.

Did the Government have to do it? Yes. The Tories fudged and avoided taking strong enough action at the start of the BSE crisis and made things infinitely worse. It may be an absurdly small risk, but Governments can't play around with public confidence in food, or importers' confidence in British products. It may be medically unnecessary but it was politically essential – and had nothing to do with over-protective nannyish sentiments.

However, once the Nanny State hounds are in full cry, all kinds of other oddments of stories flare up to join the general hullabaloo. The housing minister is so PC he is banning doorsteps because the disabled can't get up them in their wheelchairs. Mad? Scary?

Will teams of local government commissars come round and condemn your doorstep? No, it's a perfectly sensible policy for new housing, based on pilot schemes, showing how all new houses should be made easily adaptable for a lifetime – so as people get older they don't need to move. It stops the wasteful putting in and taking out of devices according to who is living in a house at the time. Boring, I know, but hardly worth a hue and cry. True, the idea of putting a warning at the top of racing-car video games telling people not to drive like that themselves is daft – a "Don't Try This At Home, Kids!" for adults. Silly, maybe, like many silly warnings issued by the last government ("Warning. This Drink is Hot!" – on hot-drink containers) but hardly a curtailment of our freedom.

Nor is our freedom threatened one iota by forbidding us to look at tobacco advertising. The tobacco industry would not spend billions on promotion if it didn't boost its sales. Most smokers (like me) desperately want to stop and no one wants their children to start, so the only freedom curtailed is the tobacco industry's avaricious desire to kill us all. The only serious freedom issue at the moment seems to me to be fox-hunting, where many people's immense, if bizarre, pleasure is about to be abolished by the tyranny of a sentimental majority.

However, the Government still has time to wriggle out of this one, and it should.

Eaters of battery chickens or farmed salmon are more cruel to animals over their whole lifetimes than fox-hunters ending a free animal's life in a brief, brutish manner. There is no good objective reason for banning it – and if it were a working-class habit, no one would lay a finger on it.

However, if it is hunted down by a rampant Commons, it will not be because the Government willed it out of any nannyish instincts, but because it was too cowardly to protect an unpopular minority in the face of a stampeding majority.

Is this government really becoming the nanny from hell? I see very little sign of it in its policies. However, there is a new puritanism in its style.

Ministers conduct themselves in sober, rather dull ways. You don't feel they are much fun, or that they have much fun – except maybe Peter Mandelson, who has an unlikely, louche set of friends of a very different Tory and Goldsmithian lavish entertaining kind. Or Robin Cook with his horse-racing.

They are a lot more puritanical than the last Labour government. Many Wilson ministers lived a high old life, some of them pretty rich, very unlike Blair's family-centred, clean-living, down-home types.

Who gives dinner parties like Tony Crosland used to, or great soirees like Harold Lever? And the new puritanical style is more than skin-deep. It's curious that New Labour ministers cannot possibly send their children to private schools, nor even grammar schools, nor use private health, while Wilson's old Labour cabinet was full of ministers with children at Westminster or St Paul's.

Harold Lever, a Manchester millionaire, a key Wilson economic minister, was never subjected to scrutiny of his business affairs as Geoffrey Robinson has been.

It's partly that the post Murdoch-era press has become so much nastier and less tolerant.

The right-wing press yearns for any sign of hypocrisy or champagne socialism among Labour ministers – so although the Blairs could afford to drink champagne for breakfast, lunch and tea, they preserve their image as homey, churchy people.

How long before Mandelson has to sew M & S labels into his Armani clothes to show this interestingly extraordinary man is just a regular guy? Ironically, the champagne did flow freely in the old days when Labour ministers really did think of themselves as socialists. However, that's all a matter of style, taste and image, not of important substance. When it comes to sinister puritanism, the family values fiasco that sank John Major's crew was a good lesson, well-learnt by Labour.

'Who gives dinner parties like Tony Crosland used to, or great soirées like Harold Lever?'

When Robin Cook was caught out having an affair and then left his wife, it was a one-day ripple without the values resonance that would have made the story run and run had he been a Tory.

That is reassuring. Labour may like a scrubbed-family image, but they have had no truck so far with the kind of family values that seek to damn others for the lives they live. I see no threat to the hard-won liberal freedoms that really matter. Indeed, I predict the steady rolling out of more.

For all the clean sincerity and earnestness of the new government, they are all of them deep-dyed liberals at heart: whatever the Conservatives say about freedom, (usually of the Ritz-dining variety) it is they at heart who want to constrict and constrain our lives whenever they get the chance. Give me Labour's worry over listeria in pasteurised cheese any time over the Tory Mary Whitehouse and Victoria Gillick tendencies.

Foxhunters hounded: The Government will find it increasingly difficult to ban hunting with hounds on moral grounds

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

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هكذا من الاصل

Even through our tears we were surprised by what we saw; we didn't realise how much we had changed

Sea of emotion: There were many unforgettable images during that remarkable week: the flag-draped coffin, the young princes dressed in black, Earl Spencer in the Abbey – and above all, acre upon acre of flowers Photograph: Tom Pilston

THE DEATH OF DIANA BY SUZANNE MOORE

While there are those who argue that we all went mad for a week in September, that the death of a rather silly, self-obsessed women was blown out of all proportion, that her passing meant no more or less than the death of any other individual, that nothing has really changed, the event that will keep 1997 in our memories for years to come was, of course, the death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

No one could have predicted the reaction: the Ballardian nature of her demise, the huge display of public grief, the sense of national reassessment that was in the atmosphere, the spectacle of a Labour leader trying to drag the monarchy into the 20th century. Instead, we look on in amazement as we behaved as if we were living in another country. And we were. It was just that no one realised that this new country was ours, that it has been for some time and what felt like new territory for some was already home for many others.

Three months later we are asking if it meant anything at all. I said at the time that to look for a direct political correlate to arise from the shock and grief surrounding Diana's death was always a mistake. Yes, there were moments of anti-monarchy feeling akin to, but not the same thing as, republicanism. There was revulsion expressed for the stuffiness of the royals, there was a feeling of a new beginning, an optimism about New Labour, a relief at the ending of Tory rule, a building mistrust of all institutions. All these things were in the air but not in a consciously politicised way.

Much of what was expressed was expressed in the first person. That was what was admired about Diana. She validated personal experience; she re-wrote the script to suit herself. Even though she was a star, somehow not of this world, what you heard repeated was that she was a real person, she spoke from the heart, she was authentic.

Her modernity, in contrast to the rest of the royals, embodied a cultural shift, a fresh way of doing things, that doesn't fit into neat political categories. These repercussions are still being felt throughout society. Diana was not a feminist but she was a product of the raising of female expectations brought about by feminism. She understood instinctively that the personal was political, for she lived a life in which she was expected to suppress her personal feeling because of public duty.

The scenes of mourning that filled our papers and screens in September were unlike anything we had seen before, yet of course there were dissenters, who thought it was all too much fuss about nothing. While I am prepared to accept that their feelings were perfectly genuine, they do not seem to accept that the feelings of those at Kensington Palace or in the Mall were equally genuine.

It was easier to dismiss this collective grief as hysteria, as fuelled by the media, as essentially empty. Some of this was to do with the equation of any kind of massing together of people as innately fascist. This fear of crowds was instilled during the darkest of the Thatcher years. Where some saw a floral revolution, Ian Jack reports the phrase "floral fascism" in "Those who Felt Differently", in *Granta*.

Yet in looking back at the remarks of so many intellectuals, I am struck by their triteness in comparison with the self-awareness and thoughtfulness of the "ordinary people" I spoke to at the time. One by one, from Gore Vidal downwards, these great men told us the crowds were not really grieving for Diana but for themselves, as if we didn't know that, as if grief did not always contain this element, as if it is not possible to feel a connection with someone you didn't know. No one said this when we cried for the poor bairns of Dunblane.

'We had simply recognised that Britishness need not be stuck in the 19th century'

In contrast, members of the public told me that they were grieving for what had happened to this country in the last 18 years, that when someone dies you re-evaluate your own life, your own priorities and that's what they felt we should all be doing as a nation. They told me that it was rare to witness real goodness in a public figure, that they themselves were surprised about how they felt and, most memorably, I can still hear a Rasta guy saying: "She's like a magnet, man. Even though she's dead she's still a magnet – pulling people towards her."

I saw dignity and though I saw tears being shed and shed my own, people were not overwhelmed by their feelings but quietly in control of them. We had not suddenly become American or European. We had simply recognised that Britishness need not be stuck in the 19th century.

Since her death, some have railed against the new "emotional correctness", where feelings must be shown at all times. Indeed, the behaviour of some of Louise Woodward's supporters could not have been more inappropriate and undignified. Emotional correctness, though, like political correctness, is a term only used by those who prefer the repressive status quo.

Popular culture has for years been moving in the direction of the subjective, the confessional, the unashamedly emotional. Official public culture has yet to catch up with these changes. Earl Spencer's speech struck this note and I will always remember the mutinous ripple of applause that spread from outside the cathedral to the inside.

Cynics argue that while we became touchy-feely for a week or so, that much-heralded new sensitivity has not materialised. Indeed, when the Government cuts benefits to the poorest women and children, it seems a joke.

Diana's death, though, coming after the Labour victory, the hype of Cool Britannia, the talk of re-branding Britain, gave much rise to much discussion of the New Britain, as though such an identity could arise fully formed and uncontested.

We saw in Diana a woman seeking to find herself, to somehow speak a more intimate and personal language within the discourse of public life. We saw a woman trying to reshape a role for herself when she had been used for little more than breeding in captivity. And we saw in the midst of the mourning for her a desire to do things differently.

We wanted tradition thrown over in the name of honest emotion. Now at least we know that the Queen is capable of grieving in public: she shed a tear at the loss of her yacht, something she did not do publicly for the loss of her daughter-in-law.

The royals have learnt to accept what they could not accept when Diana was alive, that they have to change. Tony Blair has stepped in to advise them, which is worrying, given his pledges on constitutional reform.

Earl Spencer has been shown to be a complete bastard, though I don't see how that makes his speech any less powerful. The rest of us have gone back to normal. Or not quite, for something has changed.

Diana's death meant that just for a while we saw ourselves not as we were told we were, not as we used to be, but as we are now.

Even through our tears we were surprised by what we saw; we didn't realise how much we had changed. But we had. Why it took the death of a confused and over-privileged woman to show this to each other I don't know. All I do know is that while we have lost her, I hope that we do not lose the values of love and compassion that she was seen to have represented and that for an extraordinary week we were not ashamed to talk openly about in public as well as in private.

The event that defined the year was really one in which, in an unprecedented way, we were seeking to define ourselves.

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When the worst of times became a time for conciliation

The peacemaker: Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who has come to personify the climate of hope in the province Photograph: Brian Harris

PEACE IN IRELAND
BY DAVID McKITTRICK

In Northern Ireland, what started looking like a bad year wound up as one of the best of years.

It began with death and destruction; it closed with most of the parties at the talks table, and most of the guns silent.

It hardly needs saying that the obstacles and problems ahead are daunting.

The peace process is fraught with dangers and pressure-points which could, and almost certainly will, cause great disruption.

It is a fair bet that significant acts of violence lie ahead.

Yet there is also a sense that the idea of a peace process is taking deeper and deeper root.

The original concept of inclusivity – the theory that those who had used violence for so many years might be brought into a new system rather than perpetually frozen out – was highly controversial.

Its early exponents, such as John Hume, were reviled, their moves to bring in the violent prodigals easily caricatured as appeasement of terrorism. But as the year ends, the inclusive philosophy of the peace process seems on the way to becoming the political norm.

At the beginning of the year the key question was whether another 25-year cycle of violence was in the making. The IRA had just bombed the Army's Northern Ireland headquarters; one soldier was killed and others had near-miraculous escapes.

Spring brought IRA disruption of English motorway traffic and postponement of the Grand National, while in Belfast there were sporadic loyalist killings. Political talks, which were going on in Belfast without Sinn Fein, seemed to be going nowhere.

But then the election changed everything.

Where John Major had played it long, mindful always of Ulster Unionist suspicion and disapproval of the whole project, Tony Blair and Mo Mowlam, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, went for momentum.

Early setbacks made it all look hopeless: the IRA shot two police officers and handling of the annual Drumcree marching controversy soured relations between nationalists and the Government.

Things were so bad, coming up to the main 12 July Orange marches, that 400 extra troops were drafted.

But then the Orange Order called off some contentious marches, transforming the atmosphere at a stroke.

Even so, the IRA truce of 20 July came generally as a surprise.

The Government, undeflected by continuing violence and communal friction, had systematically addressed republican preconditions for a cessation by, for example, dropping Mr Major's demand for prior decommissioning of IRA weapons.

The republicans were impressed by the Government's willingness to engage with their concerns; they were impressed too by Labour's huge majority and that in Dublin a new government was headed by Fianna Fail, well-disposed towards the peace process.

Unlike the IRA truce of 1994, the second cessation was not greeted with euphoria.

The second time round everyone had learnt hard lessons, and knew there were no guarantees it would hold in all circumstances.

None the less, it unlocked the door for political progress, paving the way for a series of historic moments.

Labour judged that its majority gave it leeway to exert strong pressure on Unionists to get into talks with Sinn Fein. It may also have judged that the general Protestant population was more ready for dialogue than the often negative and hostile attitude of some Unionist politicians suggested.

Autumn brought momentous events. The Rev Ian Paisley opted out of the talks process, but David Trimble, after soul-searching, led his larger Ulster Unionist Party into a process which included Sinn Fein. Tony Blair shook the hand of Gerry Adams, first in Belfast and then, with tremendous symbolic significance, inside 10 Downing Street.

Viewed up close on a day-to-day basis, it has often been tedious. The talks continue but the pace is glacially slow, and earlier this month the parties failed to agree even an agenda for the new year. Unionists sit in the same room as Sinn Fein but will not talk to them.

From one perspective this can seem dispiriting and ominous. So too can the fissures which opened within so many important components: some members of the IRA and Sinn Fein resigned, fearing a sell-out; the Orange Order seems split between moderates and militants; the Ulster Unionist party has critics outside its ranks and within them.

And there is still violence. The IRA killed three people before its ceasefire but loyalist violence claimed 11 lives throughout the year.

The major republican and loyalist groups are inside the process but others, smaller but potentially deadly, are on the outside and intent on wrecking it.

Next year will bring many testing moments. Will the truces hold? Can the outsiders disrupt the process? Can Sinn Fein and the IRA accept an outcome which delivers something less than the republican goal of Irish unity? There are many other contentious issues, including prison releases and policing reform.

It is also the case that relations between the nationalist and Unionist communities can be described as unfriendly and even hostile. Recurring marching controversies and political disagreements have left much bitterness in many minds.

Viewed against this background, the events of the year seem even more startling. The year began with war; it has not ended with peace, for that can only be declared with any confidence after the emergence of political agreement and the successful operation of new arrangements.

That will take years and there are no guarantees the process will stay on the rails. Yet the year closes with an immeasurably better situation than it opened; with hopes that political breakthroughs can be made and with hope that historians may some day conclude that 1997 was the year when Northern Ireland finally turned the corner.

How the Far East miracle went west

TIGERS TAMED
BY RICHARD LLOYD PARRY

In terms of its speed, unexpectedness and its potential effect on the lives of people all over the world, the East Asian economic crisis was *the* crisis of 1997, and it is certainly not over yet. What began in July with the collapse of the Thai baht ends the year with the continuing plummet of the Korean won having, in between, caused varying degrees of mayhem in Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong.

Despite $100bn of promised aid from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the plunge of the region's currencies shows few signs of bottoming out, but the response to the crisis outside the region has fallen into two distinct phases. For the first few months of the crisis, much foreign comment treated it as a spectator event, an object of fascinated, but abstract, interest and more than a little *schadenfreude*. It appeared to confirm a fashionable argument, most trenchantly argued by the economist Paul Krugman - that the "Asian tiger" model of high growth and agressive investment is inusustainable in the long run.

But since November, when the contagion spread to South Korea and Japan, the focus has shifted from the theoretical to the practical: what effect is Asia's pain going to have on the rest of the world?

For those without specialised business interests, a weak Thai baht means little more than cheaper holidays in Phuket. As Indonesia followed and, to a lesser degree, Malaysia and the Philippines, so did cheap holidays in Bali, Penanag and Mindanao.

But when the contagion spread to Korea, it was a different matter. People don't take package tours to Pusan. And, as the former eleventh largest economy in the world, the pain of the Korean squeeze is being felt around the world. The stifled sniggering at the difficulties of the tigers was silenced this week with a prediction by the IMF, that the Asian crisis will cut one per cent off growth next year throughout the world.

Korea's credit rating has sunk below those of Croatia and El Salvador, making it impossible for companies to fund their ambitious overseas plans. In Britain alone, the huge Samsung and Daewoo conglomerates announced the "postponement" of billions of pounds worth of plants and jobs. And the crisis is not purely an economic one: what began as a series of events in the financial markets, is also throwing up political problems.

Despite their eclipse by the chaos in the markets, Asia's political tensions remain, and they are exacerbated by financial insecurity - if the reunification of North and South Korea looked a tricky and expensive proposition before, it appears doubly so now, with the South's economy on its knees. But the bigger problem is the psychological effect of the collapse of the Asian tigers, and the tremendous blow they have suffered to self-esteem.

Responsibility for managing this tension will fall in large part to Britain, as new EU president, and host of the second Asia-Europe Meeting (Asem) in London next spring. The shock of sudden collapse has understandably strained nerves and tempers, and there have been ugly and sinister outbursts made worse by the West's gloating. The insinuations by the Malaysian prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, that the whole thing was part of a Jewish conspiracy orchestrated by the speculator George Soros did nothing to restore the faith of investors in his country. In Korea, demonstrators have accused the IMF, and its American and Japanese backers, of economic "imperialism" in making conditions for the bail out of their country.

The world has seen nationalist movements flourish before on the back of economic collapse. It seems, for the moment, a distant fear - but then a year ago, so did the present state of affairs. Either way, the history of the 1997 crisis will not be clear until well into next year.

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A tale of two cities – with two very different endings

LOUISE WOODWARD TRIAL BY DAVID USBORNE

A baby-sitter is accused of murdering the infant in her care. Born into a white suburban home on the outskirts of one of America's biggest cities, the toddler's name was Matthew and his life lasted just a few short months. The trial is complicated and laden with conflicting medical evidence. But the jury apparently has little difficulty in reaching a verdict: the defendant is found guilty and the sentence is life imprisonment.

Read this, and unless you spent 1997 on a different planet, you would be forgiven for assuming the child in this case was eight-month-old Matthew Eappen and the childminder the 19-year-old British au pair Louise Woodward. You would be wrong. Nor, by the way, is the city Boston. It is Chicago.

The trial of Donna Gist ended 10 days ago. She was convicted in a DuPage Country Court on 15 December of the murder of Matthew Hendrickson, who was four months old. The similarities between this and the Woodward case were striking. More important is this singular difference: the courthouse was not besieged by reporters and television crews. In fact, the Gist trial barely registered outside the court. Nor did her conviction. There has been no Free Donna Gist Campaign.

The easiest explanation for the absence of publicity in the Gist case was that Court TV – the cable channel that fed pictures from the Woodward trial to Sky News and the news bulletins of ITN and the BBC – did not cover it. Even if the cameras had been there, it is a fair bet few would have been interested in the trial. Gist was not Woodward. At 34, she is nearly twice Woodward's age and comes from a poor background. She is also black.

"To the unfortunate extent that race plays a role in social standing in our society, that Gist is black is doubtlessly a factor in her obscurity," wrote *Chicago Tribune* columnist Eric Zorn, as the Gist trial wound down. But it was not just Woodward's colour that was important, Zorn said. "If the au-pair trial cynics had asked if everyone would have been so fascinated by Louise Woodward's story had she been white but 15 years older and a career caregiver of more modest means and prospects, the answer would have been the same: No." Thus, if Woodward had not been a young, intelligent, not bad-looking white girl with, one assumes, hopes of a happy and fruitful life, would we have seen such an outcry when her original guilty verdict came down on 30 October? Events in Chicago suggest not.

When she counts her fortunes, Woodward will doubtless think first of her trial judge, Hiller Zobel. He stunned the legal world on 10 November when he slashed the jury sentence from murder to manslaughter and freed her on the 279 days she had already served. But she might also pause to ponder why her case – unlike Gist's – so fired emotion and the role that played in giving her back her freedom.

Most journalists who covered the trial will probably admit they were not prepared for the extraordinary dimensions that the story took on.

Even in hindsight, it is not immediately apparent why it commanded the headlines in the way it did, and for so long. But the answer surely lies in the trial's cast.

For readers of newspapers and followers of the television news, this was a tragedy filled with players familiar to us. And we could identify with the issues raised. Was it right for Matthew's parents, Deborah and Sunil, professionals on the threshold of successful medical careers, to sub-contract care for their two young children to a teenager with scant experience in the area?

The authors of the hate-mail that buried the Eappens during the trial obviously thought it was not. And even if we are not ourselves 18-year-olds in that tantalising gap year between school and university, when new horizons suddenly open up, many of us have been there and know teenagers who are there now.

Some of us may not have warmed to Woodward – indeed, we may, since the trial's end, have concluded privately that she was responsible somehow for Matthew's death even if she did not plot to murder him – but we think we can easily divine her.

There was some celebrity attraction to the case before the trial started: the lawyers hired to represent Woodward, a workaday pair of defence lawyers from Boston's waterfront named Silverglate and Good, had managed to recruit Barry Scheck to their team, already famous as one of the "dream team" that represented OJ Simpson.

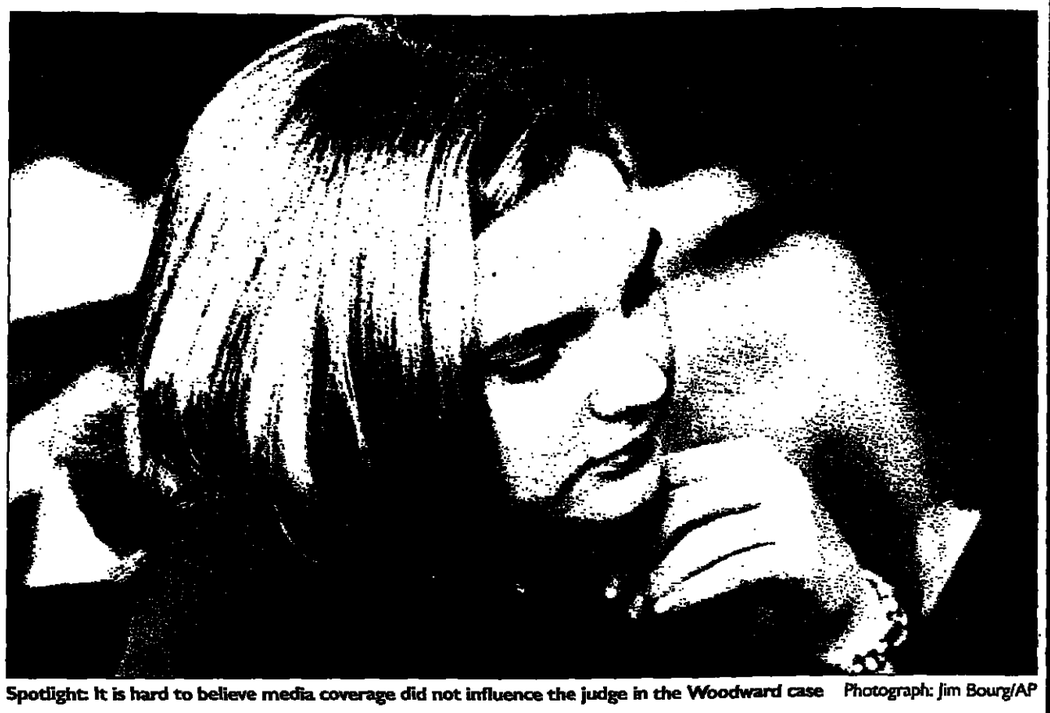
"There was someone with whom almost everyone could identify in this case," said Shari Turner, a professor at Boston University. "It mainstreamed some of the issues. For instance, people are enormously ambivalent about child care."

The public impact of the Woodward trial – it took up all of October and will come blazing back in March, when the Massachusetts Supreme Court begins hearings on appeals from both sides – would not matter if we believe this from Judge Zobel: that in making his decision on whether to revise the original jury verdict he was able completely to isolate himself from all the ballyhoo.

In one of his many off-the-record chats with journalists, he reported being bombarded with letters, phone calls, FedEx packets and telegrams from people all around the country offering advice on what he should do. He ignored it all, he said, just like he ignored the tidal waves of opinion and punditry on the television and in the newspapers.

Well, possibly. But ask yourself this: had the cameras not been in court for Woodward's trial, had there not been such intense interest in it as it played out and had there not been such a tornado of public reaction to her initial conviction on 30 October, are we really to believe that Judge Zobel would have come back 10 days later in the way that he did and overturned that conviction?

If you are not sure of the answer, think about Donna Gist. And don't hold your breath waiting for her judge to bring her last-minute salvation.



Spotlight: It is hard to believe media coverage did not influence the judge in the Woodward case Photograph: Jim Bourg/AP

Brown envelopes, white knights and humping humbug

POLITICAL SLEAZE BY DAVID AARONOVITCH

1997, of course, was the year that sleaze ended. It finished on the night of 1 May, when the nation purged itself with the biggest bout of colonic irrigation in our electoral history. In one great swoosh, the cleansing waters swept round the bends of the body politic, and flushed out all the encrusted crud that had accreted over nearly 20 years. On 2 May we felt light and empty, ready for anything.

Only nine months ago, it all seemed so different. The wavy lines appear on our mental screens, and we are transported back in time and space to the middle of March. To find the Prime Minister, John Major, telling the House of Commons why the Downey report on cash-for-questions cannot be ready before the general election that he has called, just two days earlier.

Neil Hamilton wants us to see the report, too. He is anxious to remove from his reputation the taint of having been a brown envelope recipient of Mohamed Al Fayed, the Mad Avenging Egyptian. Hospitality at the Ritz, well all right. Backhanders, not on your nelly. Which is why he will not stand down at the forthcoming election, but will vigorously contest his Tatton seat.

Meanwhile, the *Sun* captures a Beckenham Tory, Piers Merchant, in a clinch with a 17-year-old "friend of the family". Fearful that he might be discovered if he snogs the aptly named Ms Cox indoors, Merchant tries to evade scrutiny by giving her one on a park bench in public view. Momentarily disconcerted, the *Sun* rallies and takes the snaps. No one's business, but a great story. Especially with the erection, sorry, election, days away. Merchant survives – for the moment.

Sleaze dominates the early part of the campaign. So, back to Tatton, and enter the Man in White. Wounded war correspondent, Martin Bell, declares that he will run as the anti-sleaze candidate. And is written off by many as a naif, who will fall in the first hail of arrows, as battle begins.

On 1 May, Bell wins, Blair wins, Paddy wins, Alex wins, even Dafydd wins. But the Tories, inseparable in the public mind from sleaze, lose big time. Everyone absorbs the lessons of this, which is that there must now be full, open accountability. And a privacy law.

So we enter the dreamtime of the Blair honeymoon, during which we can deal with a few bits of unfinished business. Neil Hamilton is indicted by Downey, appeals to the Commons select committee, and gains some small sympathy when it refuses his plea that Mr Fayed be questioned.

And Piers Merchant proves the wisdom of his earlier al fresco strategy, by being filmed humping the friend under a duvet in York. Now not only is it no one's business, but no one cares. Except the *Sunday Mirror*, the Merchants and their Cox. Piers stands down, and the Tories hang on to the seat by a thousand votes.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, is discovered to be having an affair, admits it, separates from his wife, and lives with his lover, and – to the chagrin of the Tories, no one outside his family and circle of friends and the *Daily Mail* considers it their concern. Sleaze is dead!

It is replaced by a Freedom of Information Bill. The lobby system of unattributable press briefings is modified, so that "sources close to the Prime Minister" become, "the Prime Minister's Press Secretary". An era in British politics is coming to an end. We have commissioners for every form of behaviour, and all is well.

Or would be, if it hadn't been for Bernie Ecclestone. Bernie, once a donor to Tory party funds, had become a large Labour giver. He gived and he gived, until he had given a million pounds (an amount now referred to as "a bernie"). The fact of his giving was disclosed by Labour, but not the scale.

None of this might have mattered, had not the PM agreed to see Bernie and pals to discuss tobacco sponsorship of Formula One, and hear their worries that a ban might do them a whole lot of no good at all. When it was known that the Government had (a) bought Bernie's argument, and (b) earlier received a big donation, nasty suspicious minds put two and two together and came up with a million.

As the row deepened Mr Blair went on television, apologised for the misunderstanding, said that he himself had instigated sending the money back to Bernie and that he was now referring the whole matter of party funding to yet another commission.

And finally, there was Paymaster-General Geoffrey Robinson, a rich man in a poor person's party, who was found to have offshore accounts, and subjected by the Tory party and the *Guardian* to a flurry of resignation demands on the grounds of hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy maybe, but not sleaze. That died in 1997.

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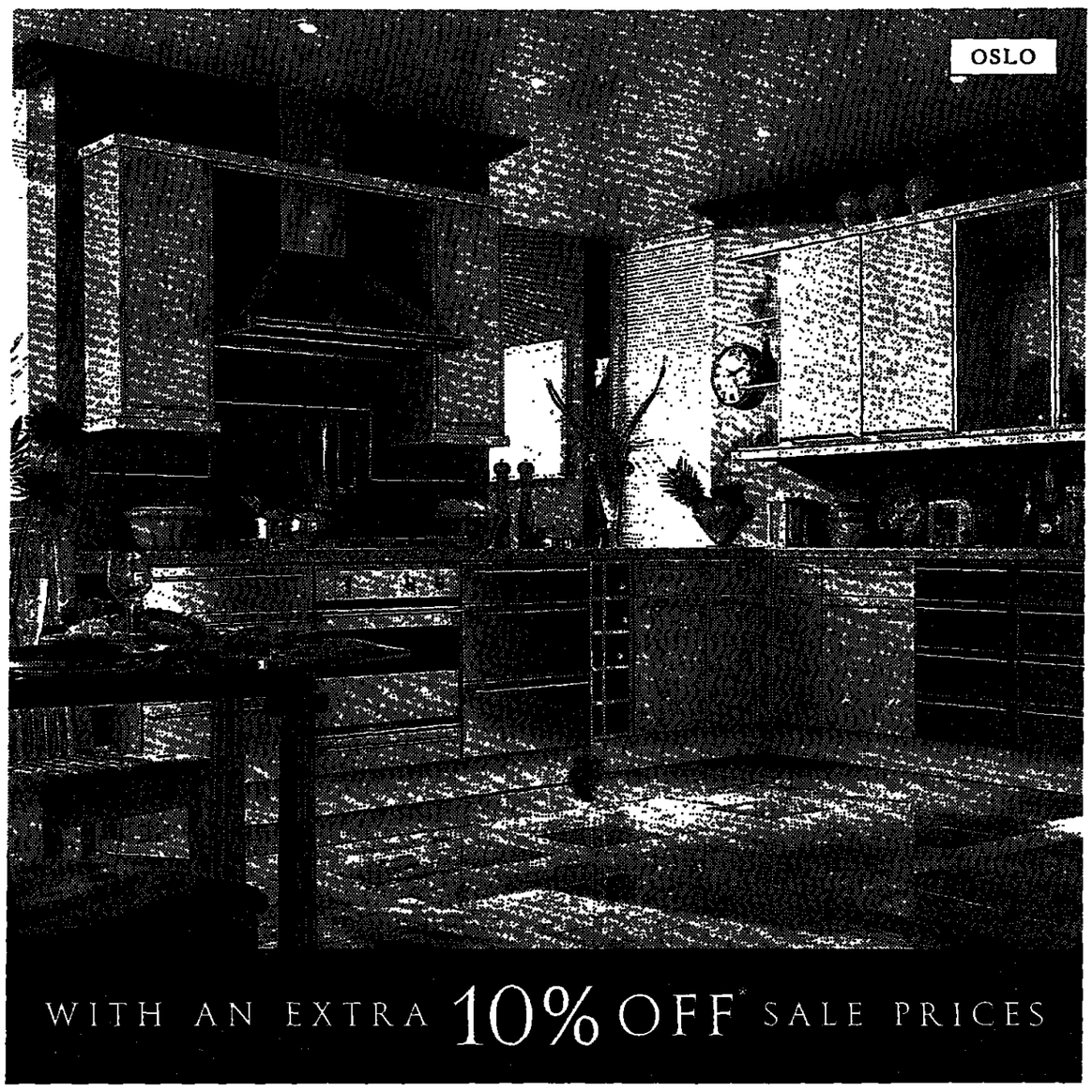

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MOMENTS THAT MADE THE YEAR

The Britons had sneered and bullied and ruled the roost. No one in Hong Kong, however amnesiac, could ignore that sordid heritage

Photograph: Tom Pilston

Flag day: There was respect, even affection, as the Old Firm left. But can Britain's democratic legacy endure despite Peking's expectations of obedience?

END OF EMPIRE
BY STEVE CRAWSHAW

Sure, there were the moments of history to worry about. End of an era, new dawn for the millennium, that sort of thing. But many Hong Kongers were more concerned with the weather. Beginning on 30 June, it rained. And rained and rained. City pavements and streets turned into what seemed like white-water rapids. Large parts of the transport system ground to a halt because of landslides. Raindrops mixed with the tears on the cheeks of Chris Patten, the departing governor.

The floods – dramatic and severe, even by Hong Kong's tropical-downpour standards – were as much of a local talking point as the history that they seemed to eclipse. And yet, the handover of Hong Kong to China was not a wash-out. Almost the opposite: it was remarkable for being so unremarkable.

This enormous and enormously pre-planned event had theoretically been in the pipeline for the past 99 years, ever since the British signed the lease in the imperial "we make all the rules" heyday. Realistically, the handover had been under discussion for the past 13 years. And, for the past two years, large teams were involved in little else but planning for the Big Day.

Despite that, there were moments when the handover came perilously close to chaos. There had been so much fancy diplomatic footwork on both sides that some details of etiquette remained confused, even at the eleventh hour. Hence the hesitations and confusions by the Prince of Wales and Chinese President Jiang Zemin – shall we sit down? shall we stand up? where must we go? – at the handover itself, as the British and Chinese flags fluttered photogenically in the fake breeze (or lacky day!) of a wind machine.

Thousands of journalists converged on Hong Kong for this last moment of post-colonial razzmatazz. The hotels thought they would be booked up months in advance, hence the confident tripling of the prices. The move backfired somewhat when it turned out that foolish virgins were richly rewarded: luxurious rooms were available at knockdown prices to anybody who avoided making a reservation until the very last moment. Hoteliers were seriously disgruntled, as were some of their out-of-pocket guests.

Unlike some of the other extraordinary moments of history in the past few years – the fall of the Berlin Wall, for example, or the release of Nelson Mandela in South Africa – the momentous importance of the Hong Kong handover was not always up-front. The ever pragmatic Hong Kongers were resolutely laid-back. There were some celebrations on the night of 30 June. But drunken expats were more exuberant than the Hong Kongers themselves, most of whom simply sat at home and watched the television.

None the less: it *was* important. It was the end of a colonial era – and in that respect was partly welcomed by all Hong Kongers, whatever their political beliefs. Many in Britain came to identify the British legacy with the governorship of Chris Patten: heroically or hopelessly trying to preserve the people of Hong Kong from the undemocratic manoeuvrings of Peking. But there had been many years of British rule before that. The Britons had sneered and bullied and ruled the roost, because that was what they were born to do. No Hong Konger, however generous or amnesiac, could ignore that sordid heritage. My single most memorable and shocking encounter during the handover period took place in a little apartment in Kowloon: a meeting with a 101-year-old who grew up during a century of British rule, before finally outliving it. His knowledge of English was confined to a handful of obscenities – the words that he had heard most frequently from his colonial masters.

Now that the British were departing, there was respect, even affection. Above all, everybody knew that this was the beginning of a more Chinese Hong Kong, which is where the real mysteries begin. Many analysts argued that the relative calm during the handover was misleading. As soon as the television crews went, it was said, the crackdown against the democrats would begin, unnoticed by the rest of the world.

In reality, the democrats have remained almost undisturbed since 1 July. There are still many who believe that Tung Chee-hwa (multi-millionaire businessman, new chief executive of Hong Kong, and friend of Peking) is, in the words of one official who knows him well, somewhat "allergic to democracy". But whatever his private beliefs, there has not been the much-heralded crackdown.

Hong Kongers have been thinking more about money than about politics (nothing new, there), as the regional markets have rollercoasted and nosedived in recent weeks and months. Meanwhile, however, the impact of reunification with China will only begin to be understood as the months and years go by. Perhaps Hong Kong will gradually be eaten up by the economically successful but politically repressive mainland Chinese regime. Or perhaps Hong Kong's tiny canker of democracy – a few million people who don't like being told what to do, and don't mind saying so – will gradually rot the huge Communist apple. The endlessly parroted official line is that Hong Kong and China will continue to have "one country, two systems". But that will only last for a limited time.

By 2047, even according to the official agreement, there will be one system: in practice, the convergence may come much sooner. Will the jails of Hong Kong fill up with free-thinkers – or will the hardline regime in Peking be the one to crumble? Six months after the *Britannia* glided into the Hong Kong night, the questions about the future are still unanswered. The biggest changes are yet to come.

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Hypocrisy and deceit: the essential ingredients for war

THE MIDDLE EAST
BY ROBERT FISK

Madeleine Albright, America's increasingly ineffectual Secretary of State, described 1997 as "not a good year for the peace process". It was a disaster, which in the coming months may well bring war to the Middle East.

As usual in the region, 1997 started in hypocrisy and deceit. The Algerian government announced that "terrorism was on its last legs". Then a series of mass atrocities – the systematic throat-cutting by supposed "Islamists" of thousands of women and children in the poor villages of the Mitidja plain – proved that the Algerian civil war was now of Bosnian proportions.

A few weeks later, the Egyptian government announced that "the terrorists were finished". Then came Luxor and the murder and mutilation of 58 foreign tourists. In Lebanon, the year began with more talk of the nation's rebirth and reconstruction – and ended with massive external debts and growing fear of another war with Israel.

But it was the Arab-Israeli "peace" that was finally buried this year, when the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, decided – in total contravention of all the agreements guaranteed by the United States – to build yet another Jewish settlement on occupied Arab land. Har Homa, most of the Western press obediently called it – the Arab name of Abu Ghoneim – was largely forgotten as Israel created facts on the ground – and the Palestinians, pleading vainly to the Americans, the French, even the British, watched their dreamed-for Palestinian state turn to dust.

'All over the region, Arabs wanted help from Europe. Some hope'

The Arab nations which had stood by America – whose troops supported the Western armies in the 1991 Gulf War, whose investments have been lodged in New York, whose lands are protected or lived in (or occupied) by American troops – watched appalled, their impotence as obvious as their sense of betrayal. Those Palestinians who had long since abandoned any allegiance to Yassir Arafat expressed their own frustration in a predictably bloody and terrible way: with wicked suicide bombings in Israel. An even more angry Netanyahu then denounced "terrorism" and accused Arafat of giving the "green light" to the bloodbath.

The pattern is now established. Israel blames Arab "terrorism" for lack of progress in the "peace process" and refuses to make "concessions" (i.e. fulfil Israel's commitments) in the agreement. He then announces new settlements on stolen land – and gives further provocation to would-be Palestinian murderers.

By year's end, the corruption of the dictatorial and brutal Arafat was complete when he agreed to allow the CIA to decide which Palestinians should or should not be released from prison.

Mr Netanyahu, meanwhile, went in for a little "terrorism" of his own, sending at least two Israeli murderers to kill an official of Hamas – which claimed at least two of this year's bombings – in the capital of friendly Jordan, whose King Hussein is increasingly despised by his own people for his peace with Israel. The Israeli secret service was blamed for "botching" the attempted murder – not for trying to carry it out against all international law – but it was enough to convince the Arabs that Israel did not want peace.

For when Mrs Albright tried to court them to attend the Qatar Arab-Israeli economic summit, almost all boycotted the meeting, preferring instead to turn up at Tehran – in the capital of America's principle adversary in the Middle East – for an Islamic summit at which Iran's new president, Mohamed Khatami, issued an unprecedented call for a dialogue with the "American people". President Clinton, still fearful of the Israeli lobby which now virtually controls US Middle East policy, said he'd like a dialogue too – on "terrorism" and the Middle East "peace process", the two subjects upon which the Iranians have no interest in talking to the Americans.

But the Europeans – having stormed out of Iran when a German court blamed the supreme leadership for the murder of Kurdish opponents in Berlin – crept back to Tehran in the autumn to continue their own dialogue with one of the Middle East's great oil nations. All over the region, Arabs, too, wanted to ask the Europeans – the very nations which created the morasse in which the Middle East finds itself – for help. They wanted a European initiative, European pressure on Israel and on America. Some hope.

When Saddam Hussein ordered US weapons inspectors out of Iraq, President Clinton thought he could talk tough and launch a few more cruise missiles at the impoverished Iraqis. The Arabs told him to get lost. When Mrs Albright turned up in the region to dig the long-dead peace process out of its grave, the tough-talking secretary of state turned into a mouse, blandly mouthing Israeli government policies, claiming that killing was worse than "building houses" – her mendacious reference to stealing Arab land – and suggesting that settlement-building, which contradicts the very foundation of the peace, was legal. By the time she got round to mentioning Palestinian grievances, the Israelis were treating her with the contempt she deserved.

At all this, the bad guys of the region rejoiced: Saddam finished the year by telling the Americans they could not visit his palaces, even if they did think a warhead or two might be concealed under the four-poster beds. The Arab "partners for peace" turned up *en masse* to demonstrate their friendship towards the new Iran. And the Americans went on supporting the Algerian government (which is increasingly implicated in the massacres – or at least the failure to prevent them) and the Egyptian government, whose own corruption and brutality has helped provoke its own home-grown and vicious rebellion.

By year's end, the ceasefire in southern Lebanon was a charade, with villagers being killed – by Hizbollah but more frequently by Israelis – every week. Israel talked about fighting "a war against terrorism on two fronts", suggesting that a coming bloodbath would take place in both the West Bank and Lebanon. But whoever Mr Netanyahu thinks he might be fighting, the question must be asked: who would win?

Another day, another funeral: Algeria, where a civil war of Bosnian proportions has claimed thousands Photograph: Magnum

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MOMENTS THAT MADE THE YEAR

1997: when the Teletubbies' star rose, Oasis' fell, and Hale-Bopp blazed a trail across the heavens



Star quality: Chris Evans, who liked the company so much he bought it, Dolly, no mere lamb chop, and Kirsty Young, the news and current affairs darling of Channel 5

Strange beings arrived in Britain in 1997.

So we said "Hello Dolly" to an extraordinary cloned sheep. Meanwhile, half the country was saying "Eh-Oh" in imitation of those spooky things in nappies – the Teletubbies.

Children took to tamagotchis, tiny Japanese electronic pets, and in the spring we all stared at the Hale-Bopp comet streaking across the sky.

Lara Croft, the busty babe in the computer game Tomb Raider II, took over cyberspace, while Xena, warrior princess, became a star of the new Channel 5, fighting mythical beasts.

In pop, the big names of '96 shrank. Out went Oasis, with their indifferent third album and Britpop lost its edge.

We finally realised the Spice Girls were a con. In came sounds of the Asian underground and Big Beat, while The Verve were the success of the year, with their album *Urban Hymns*.

In a retro world, oldies made a comeback.

Elton John's song for Diana, Princess of Wales, took him back to the top of the charts; brought him back from the pop dead.

Mick Jagger showed that he was still rock 'n' rollin' by becoming a dad at 54; and Michael Parkinson replayed his best bits and got a new show for 1998.

(Wogan is trying the same trick).

The likes of Wham!, Spandau Ballet and break-dancing were big again in an Eighties pop revival as *Dallasty* dressing – glamour, glitter and sequins – returned with big City bonuses.

Fake fur was everywhere – knickers, kagouls, you name it – and *faux* cow bedspreads were more than a compensation for the banning of T-bone steaks.

Buffalo Trainers, with their Seventies platforms, made jogging hard for the fashionable in their turned-up trousers.

Looking back a little further, the "secret agent" look *a la* Diana Rigg in *The Avengers* raged after Liz Hurley's success in *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*; and Medieval Babes cut a CD that made Gregorian chants hip for the first time in centuries.

If you wanted to make it big on the London stage, it paid to play dead.

So Sian Phillips excelled in *Marlene*, while impersonators of Hilda Baker, Kenneth Williams and Oscar Wilde (theatrical face of the year) all drew big crowds.

Success as Oscar in the movie *Wilde* rehabilitated the ubiquitous Stephen Fry; and Michael Collins, the IRA leader, became a star again 75 years after his assassination, due to a biopic featuring Liam Neeson and because Gerry Adams became the first republican leader to enter Number 10 since the "Big Fellow" in 1921.

"Sensation" caused a stir in the art world – prompting fears of barbarians at the gates of the Royal Academy, which made a portrait of Myra Hindley, comprising children's handprints, the centrepiece of its exhibition.

Arundhati Roy wowed the literary world with her first novel, the Booker-winning *God of Small Things*.

Lord Chadlington of Shandwick PR resigned from running the Royal Opera House.

Condemned for leaving such a mess, applauded for carrying the can, he took the only course open to a smart PR man.

HELLO, GOODBYE BY JACK O'SULLIVAN

On TV, *This Life* was smothered and *Men Behaving Badly* was retired after a final Christmas binge. Farewell, I suspect, to "Friends".

Michael Grade stubbed out his last cigar at Channel 4. Bet Lynch and Racquel pulled their last pints on the *Street*, while Cindy Beale deserted *EastEnders* only to return to huge acclaim. Steve Coogan nearly became yesterday's comedian, but was saved by *Alan Partridge*.

Kirsty Young, Channel 5's sexy blonde newscaster, was the big new discovery, putting the wind up the likes of Jon Snow on *Channel 4 News*. And ordinary folk like Maureen who couldn't pass her test in *Driving School* and Eileen, the manager from hell in *Hotel*, became instant stars of the new "reality soaps".

Zoe Ball took over Radio 1's early-morning DJ slot from Chris Evans, but Ginger had the last laugh with the success of his rival show on Virgin, later joining the ranks of media entrepreneurs by buying a controlling stake in the company.

A kindred spirit, Nicola Horlick, started the year sacked – from her job as a fund manager with Morgan Grenfell, and returned to the public eye in September with her book *Can You Have It All?*

Manchester United's Eric Cantona has kicked his last spectator.

Since leaving with another championship medal, he has been living in Barcelona and making a film about gangsters in Marseilles.

Peter O'Sullevan bowed out switched off his microphone after commentating on his 50th Grand National.

In cricket, Graham Gooch left the crease at 44, one of the all-time greats of county cricket and Dickie Bird called over for the last time.

The young sporting pretenders got younger: Tiger Woods won the US Masters and 16-year-old Martina Hingis became the youngest Wimbledon women's champion this century.

And, of course, the Grim Reaper thinned the ranks of the great, the good and the infamous.

From academia, AL Rowse, Isaiah Berlin, Hans Eysenck; from politics, Mobuto Sese Seko, Deng Xiaoping, Chaim Herzog, Hastings Kamuzu Banda, Michael Manley, Georges Marchais, Paul Tsongas, Paulo Friere; from the cinema, Fred Zinneman, Stubby Kaye, James Stewart and Robert Mitchum; from the arts, Allen Ginsberg, Stephan Grappelli, Jonathan Silver, Roy Liechtenstein, Sir George Solti, William Burroughs, Laurie Lee, John Denver and rock singer Michael Hutchence.

Gianni Versace and Sir James Goldsmith also passed away. The world mourned Diana and Mother Teresa. Journalism said goodbye to Sir John Junor, Vincent Hanna, Jeffrey Bernard, Bobby Campbell, and our own Ruth Picardie.

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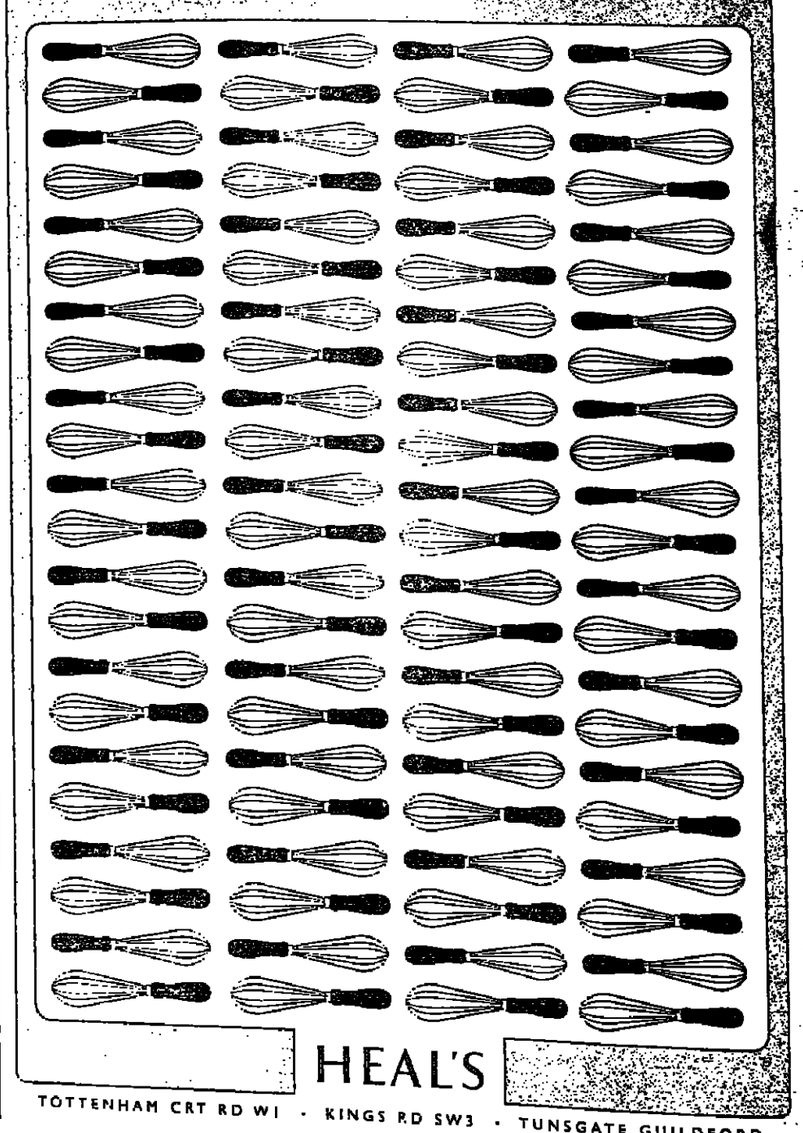

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Fine romance proves that big isn't necessarily beautiful

FILM BY RYAN GILBEY

The best films can take you back to the first time you were ever held in the spell of the cinema screen, with the smell of popcorn hanging in your nostrils, and the sound of the projector whispering in the distance. There were a handful of pictures this year that made me remember how intoxicating cinema can be. My favourite film of 1997 was Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo & Juliet*, which proved to be less a case of the film-maker adapting the text than lunging at it with a broad sword. Rather than simply updating the play, Luhrmann dragged the setting into modern times while audaciously keeping the language firmly plugged into the late 16th century. The results were sensual, witty and bold, with moments that made Fellini look like a master of understatement.

David Lynch made a breathtaking comeback with *Lost Highway*, which reminded you of his uncanny ability to tap into primal, intangible fears and desires. It was the kind of daring picture that a director only usually has the guts to make at the start of his career or during exile.

Meanwhile, David Cronenberg's *Crash* was finally released, and, as predicted by our more upstanding newspapers, many viewers imitated the behaviour of the film's characters and started getting their sexual kicks from causing motorway pile-ups. To date, the shocking number of deaths and injuries for which the film has been responsible amounts to no less than ... Hold on, I've got the figures here somewhere ... Oh, well, anyway, it's a lot, I can tell you.

There's every possibility that 1997 will be remembered as the year the big guns were forced to check the quality of their ammunition; the year the blockbuster died (or at least retired to its sick-bed); the year in which audiences realised that size wasn't everything, and chose *The Full Monty* over *Speed 2*. Of course, they also chose *Bean*, but to dwell on that fact would sabotage the most water-tight argument for the burgeoning health of popular cinema, so we'll move quickly on.

As the American magazine *Premiere* reported, many of the major studios were rocked by poor box-office returns. Flushed with the success of last year's *Independence Day*, 20th Century Fox loosened its purse strings and paid dearly when the budgets for *Volcano* and *Speed 2* were not matched by their profits, while Warner Bros didn't notch up a single blockbuster hit, despite putting their muscle behind *Conspiracy Theory*, *Contact* and *Batman and Robin*. Even the best of the potential blockbusters, *Men in Black*, lost the box-office fight, in Britain at least, to *The Full Monty*, which is still hogging multiplex screens long after such a supposedly surefire hit as *Batman and Robin* has been despatched to the shelves of a Woolworth's near you.

This isn't blind patriotism, since the best two "British" films of the year, *Nil By Mouth* and *The English Patient*, were buoyed up by foreign money, while the majority of the year's finest work came from beyond these shores. From France: *Ridicule*, *L'Appartement* and *A Self-Made Hero*; from Japan, *Kids Return*; and from Belgium, *Ma Vie en Rose*, a picture that had the impish joy of Tim Burton's early work.

Burton himself came all over bitter and twisted with *Mars Attacks!*, and actually learnt to laugh at himself, which was a big improvement. Many of the year's sharpest comedies also came from America – *Big Night*, *Swingers*, *Grosse Pointe Blank*, *Welcome to the Dollhouse*. Any picture that ends with George Segal and Mary Tyler Moore getting busted on drugs charges has a head start on being the funniest film of the year, and David O Russell's *Flirting with Disaster* undoubtedly deserves that accolade. Horror made a significant comeback with three startling new movies: *The Frighteners*, *Scream and Alien Resurrection*.

But with any recognition of worth comes the simultaneous acknowledgement that there were some films out there that constituted serious crimes against humanity. This year may have been no worse than any other, but it's hard to remember that when you're watching *Dangerous Ground*, *Shooting Fish* or any film starring a member of the *Friends* cast who isn't Courteney Cox.

And can it really be a civilised world that even allows Chris Rea *out of his house*, let alone into a film studio to make *La Passione*?

Much to correct, much to withdraw, much to query

VISUAL ARTS BY TOM LUBBOCK

The critics are the last people to do these magic moments. What do they remember? Writing a review (or so I find) tends to achieve complete evacuation of the experience in question. Ah, but we have our cuttings to rifle and read over ... But then, what an opportunity there for self-doubt, misgiving and bewilderment. Can we take our own words for it? Can we even see what we were driving at, all those months ago? Much to correct, much to withdraw, much to blankly query.

For instance – and this is to the immediate point – I see that I wrote about "The Quick and the Dead", the South Bank Touring Exhibition on art and anatomy, that it "may well be the most interesting show to be seen this year". I wrote that in November, so was not taking much of a chance, though still hedging prudently, and what "interesting" was supposed to mean I'm now not certain, but it could have simply meant "satisfying to write a review of".

And that's another thing these retrospects make clear: how the sheer imperative to get something definite *said* can override all other considerations, and subsequently creates a positive barrier to retrieving your original response. And maybe there wasn't one, anyway. Maybe you made it all up. Oh, but surely it was interesting, and more, to see this historical line-up of anatomical creatures, some so hearty, some so queasy, all so remote from modern medical *froideur* – lots of issues there, but some fantastic drawings too: should have made a second visit, just to make sure.

And there were Duane Hanson's remarkable human simulacra, posed weary and weighed-down around the Saatchi Gallery, sculptures whose very lack of artistic handling made them peculiarly vulnerable and exposed to the viewer's mercy. Yes, I seem to have liked that a lot, seem to have been very persuasive on the subject – though, if the show was still on, I don't know that I'd run to see it again. And which is truer, the judgment then or now? Yet I still feel warmly about the exhibition, perhaps just because it was good to talk about.

A further professional deformation, that – to look back fondly on the things that reviewed well, that made a good write-up. That would also include three German shows from early in the year. There was the Lovis Corinth retrospective at the Tate, the nearest thing to an art blockbuster this year, a lot of painterly huff and dash redeemed at the end by the wonderful late self-portraits. There were the drawings of Georg Grosz (at the Royal Academy). There were Auguste Sander's photos of "People of the 20th Century" (National Portrait Gallery), that strange, stiff portrait-series which looks like a catalogue of human life as seen from an infinite distance. No. Yes. I stand by all that. Absolutely.

And "Sensation" (RA) can't be forgotten either (but that memory is hardly a personal matter, the whole world enforced it) – for a handful of good works on top of everything else.

To close, though, with an objective fact. There's no doubt who the most exhibited artist was: William Hogarth. The tercentenary of his birth was marked with shows at the Tate Gallery, the Sir John Soane Museum, the Whitworth Gallery, the British Museum and the National Gallery. Never wrote about any of them, certainly saw some of them, but I can't now remember quite which.

Film of the year: Clare Danes and Leonardo DiCaprio in Baz Lurhmann's lavish and unorthodox screen adaptation of *Romeo & Juliet*

Tales of the Unexpected I, or how the Teletubbies caught our critic napping

TELEVISION BY THOMAS SUTCLIFFE

It is one hallmark of the memorable moment that everyone will be expected to spare a moment for it – that, whatever they are doing, it should be set aside for a while to make space for this unexpected rip in the dull predictability of common experience. In terms of television viewing, one simple test is: does what you are watching give you the impulse to summon others to watch it with you?

There were several such moments in 1997 – some of them bathetic, some of them, it transpired, genuinely historic. But the strength of the impulse itself will not tell you much about the *moment* – in the sense of weight or seriousness – of what you are watching. If I'm honest, for example, I felt the impulse most sharply one day when I was watching review tapes at home. Coming to the end of one programme, I ejected the tape, and my VCR reverted automatically to the channel to which it was tuned. What I saw was a landscape of geometrically perfect hills dotted with primary-colour flowers and peopled by callipygous space bears, with screens in their fleecy tummies. I watched open-mouthed for a while, dazed by the heady, almost toxic cuteness of the scene, but when a lambent sun appeared, framing the face of a chuckling baby, I had to call for help. Had I first encountered the Teletubbies *after* their invasion of the general cultural consciousness, I would have been more blasé and more evaluative; as it was, this was a moment when – rather like the video machine itself – the critical mind lapsed into idle and something more guileless took over.

There was a far graver occasion on which that took place – though, this time, I was the callee, roused from sleep by the news that the Princess of Wales was dead and stumbling straight for the television to share the sense of stupefaction that the serial should have ended so abruptly. Earlier in the year, Everyman's *Diary of a Princess* had showed a woman working out how to turn media manipulation to moral ends – offering the titillation of glamour-in-danger as she posed, elegant even in armour, in a minefield.

And though there were other moments of gaping wonder in the year – Portillo grey-faced with shock at his election count, Tracey Emin staggering from the set of the Turner Prize discussion – those were moments that kept only a partisan group or a cultural coterie spellbound. Nothing matched the news coverage of Diana's death, or the live broadcast of her funeral, for its ability to pin almost every kind of viewer to the screen. The quality of what you saw here wasn't the point – rarely can a live news broadcast have stretched so little information so far – but, as you watched, you felt part of a great, still congregation.

The best television isn't momentous in that sense: you couldn't really have shouted "See this" about any individual sequence in Tony Marchant's ambitious *Holding On* (though it had moments that have left a lasting echo in the mind) or in *I'm Alan Partridge* (easily best comedy of 1997). But, while television's contingent moments will always have an immediacy that otherprogrammes find hard to match, they shouldn't make us forget how hard it is to produce something that makes you *want* to watch week after week, rather than something you simply *must* watch right now.

Tales of the Unexpected II, or how Tom Stoppard made our critic cry

THEATRE BY PAUL TAYLOR

How do you define a "defining moment"? I can think of several defining moments in my theatrical year, all of them based on a slightly different understanding of what the term means. If it's an "I will never be the same again after this aesthetic-cum-moral thrill", then I must give pride of place to the moment, in Richard Eyre's production of *The Invention of Love*, when I found myself watching a Stoppard play through a blur of tears. Beforehand, this would have seemed as likely as my watching a football match wide-awake.

There's a strange link between the sequence that caused this reaction and another in the same director's *King Lear*. Stoppard's play imagines an out-of-time meeting between the elderly, professorial AE Housman and his younger, undergraduate self. Soul-mates recognise each other across an aching gulf: one has the uncomfortable power of incognito over the other, whom he can only protect so far.

These are the very qualities Eyre's *Lear* so matchlessly communicated in the relationship between the disguised Edgar and the King, and the exploration of these heart-snagging affinities between two men produced the deepest theatrical pleasure of the year. Paul Rhys was the youth in both instances. Brilliant performances from Ian Holm as Lear, John Wood as the older Housman, and from the ever-astonishing Judi Dench in *Amy's View*, ensured that Richard Eyre left the National on the wave of triumph he was owed.

If a "defining moment" is the point at which you make some personal discovery about the artform or at which a semi-conscious hunch ripens into something more palpable, then 1997, from where I'm sitting, has not been short of them. Caryl Churchill's superb *Blue Heart* and Complicite's staging of Ionesco's *The Chairs* taught me to look at the Theatre of the Absurd and its ludic magnifications and metaphors with new eyes. It's not the grand existential statements that matter but the essential realism of the emotions and the relationships. Katie Mitchell's wonderful staging of six Samuel Beckett shorts for the RSC reconfirmed this.

If the new-writing side of Peter Hall's tragically aborted repertory project at the Old Vic showed how a stage of that size exposes the studio-scale imagination and flimsy construction of much recent drama, the season as a whole was mighty proof of the virtues of a true acting company. Meanwhile, at the RSC Stratford, too many of the big-house Shakespeare stagings seemed to have no deeper motive than to keep the tired machine ticking over and the tills ringing. By contrast, at the Swan, Laurence Boswell's Notting Hill Carnival take on Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* was the year's best example of how to bring a difficult classic alive.

Meanwhile, the Government behaves as if theatre occupies roughly the same place in its affections as single mothers. The old "spread a little unhappiness" policy, whereby everyone got a share of the misery, has been switched by the London Arts Board to one of selective murder. The Gate, the King's Head and the Greenwich theatres are in the balance. If only there were a culture minister prepared to think the unthinkable: that the arts are not a mere adjunct to life but one of the main reasons life is worth living.

Bittersweet harvest of a year that was OK for computers, but bad for Britpop

POP BY ANDREW MUELLER

If the music of 1997 was characterised by anything, it was a failure to be characterised by anything. The Britpop bandwagon that had been knocking down pretty much everything in its path for the previous three years finally ran into a ditch, leaving its erstwhile passengers to fend for themselves. Some (ie Blur, whose eponymous album was a glorious reinvention) coped better than others (ie just about everyone else ever associated with the *Zeitgeist* Blur ignited in the first place).

In 1997, there were no defining themes, no resounding moments, although endless acres of print and vast clouds of airtime were devoted to trying to confer immortality on either or both of The Spice Girls and Oasis. The Spices released a second album and a film, cracked America, and managed to establish themselves as world-famous sex symbols, vocalists, actors and songsmiths, which isn't bad going for five ordinary-looking people who can't sing, dance, act or write terribly well. The little kudos they do deserve is getting away, almost unnoticed, with one of the most bewildering lyrics ever to reach No 1. The thunderously annoying "Spice Up Your Life" squawked something about "Yellow man in Timbuktu". Given that Timbuktu is situated in Mali, in the southern Sahara, it's a fair bet that the only yellow men in the vicinity are those with jaundice.

Oasis, who also know a thing or two about the baffling couplet, released their third album, *Be Here Now*. Despite blanket acclaim from a music press cowed into submission by Oasis's unprecedented dominance, it was a crashingly dull record. Oasis's disaffected cheer-squad largely transferred their affections to The Verve, whose *Urban Hymns* spawned two jukebox anthems ("The Drugs Don't Work" and "Bittersweet Symphony"). Verve frontman Richard Ashcroft sometimes sounds like he's trying a bit hard in his efforts to become a sort of post-modern Gram Parsons, but at least he's trying, and also recognises that even a guitar-led British pop group should look further for inspiration than other guitar-led British pop groups.

Which leads us nicely to Radiohead. Radiohead's 1995 album, *The Bends*, was any sane judge's best of that year, and this year's *OK Computer* saw the Oxford-based quintet well on the way to a hat-trick. What Radiohead accomplished with *OK Computer* – which was, to be crassly reductive, a combination of the splenetic fury of Elvis Costello's *Blood & Chocolate* with the cinematic sweep of U2's *The Unforgettable Fire* – should be admired as long as people buy pop music. Their live shows confirmed the view that they're the act everyone else is trying to follow – inventive yet accessible, scabrous yet compassionate.

It seems unlikely that American audiences will take to *OK Computer* as ravenously as they took to Radiohead's early single "Creep". In another unremittingly dismal year for American music – aside from oddities such as Ben Folds Five and Eels, and the mostly brilliant hip-hop delinquents Wu-Tang Clan – Americans took instead to British dance. The Prodigy topped the Billboard charts, The Chemical Brothers weren't far off, and a degree of success was enjoyed by Republica, despite their uncanny resemblance to Transvision Vamp, minus the jokes.

Despite the absence of an invigorating sense that anything definite was going on, 1997 yielded a rich harvest of terrific records. For what it's worth, then, the 10 albums of this year that this listener would take on a voyage to find somebody yellow in Timbuktu are: *OK Computer*; Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds' *The Boatman's Call*; Kenickie's *At The Club*; U2's *Pop*; Geneva's *Farther*; Sixteen Horsepower's *Low Estate*; Wu-Tang Clan's *Wu-Tang Forever*; *Blur*; Eels' *Beautiful Freak*; and Prefab Sprout's *Andromeda Heights*.

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Today sees the start of the sale season, reckoned by many to offer the best bargains for years. Our fashion writer *Melanie Rickey* selects some of the best.

Sale of the century: many shops began discounting before Christmas to lure in reluctant shoppers

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

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Aquascutum, 100 Regent St, London W1, 0800-282-922. Winter sale now on until 31 Jan with discounts on womenswear, menswear and accessories. Men's suits from £425 to £295, women's 100 per cent wool jacket, was £350 now £225.

Brother to Brother, 202 West Street, Sheffield, 0114 2754 296. Sale begins tomorrow with 30-50 per cent off menswear labels including Dirk Bikkembergs, Helmut Lang Jeans and mainline, Evisu Jeans, Copperwheat Blundell, 6876 and Griffin.

Browns, 23-27 South Molton St, London W1, 0171 491 7833. Sale begins 3 Jan, reductions up to 50 per cent on labels including Jil Sander, Gaultier, Tocca, Demeulemeester & Lucien Pellat-Finet.

Browns Focus, 38-39 South Molton St, London W1, 0171 629 0666. Sale begins 3 Jan, reductions up to 40 per cent on labels including Stella McCartney, Maharishi, Evisu, & Helmut Lang Jeans.

Butler & Wilson, 20 South Molton Street, London W1. Sale starts tomorrow, up to 50 per cent on selected items including mock jet brooches and necklaces. Not in Fulham Road branch.

Carter, 11 Upper Queen Street, Belfast, 01232 243 412. Women's section sale begins tomorrow, men's section sale begins 1 Jan, good discounts on labels including Joop, Armani and Donna Karan.

Comme des Garçons, 59 Brook St, London W1, 0171 493 1258. Sale now on, reductions up to 40 per cent on current stock.

Cruise Flannels, Birmingham (0121 633 4154), Nottingham (01159 476 466) and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, (0191 261 0510). Sale starts tomorrow with 30-50 per cent off labels including Joseph, Prada, Ralph Lauren, and Henri Lloyd.

Dolce & Gabbana, 175 Sloane Street, London SW1. Sale begins tomorrow with 40 per cent off current stock. Best buys include pale blue coat dress with appliquéd flower detail.

Dexter Wong, 17 Monmouth St, London WC2, 0171-284-0752. Sale begins 2 Jan with 20 per cent off womenwear, menswear and accessories.

DKNY, 27 Old Bond Street, London W1. Sale begins tomorrow with reductions starting at 20 per cent on current stock.

Donna Karan, 19, New Bond St, London W1, 0171-495-3100. Sale begins tomorrow with reductions starting at 20 per cent on current stock.

Emporio Armani, 191 Brompton Road, London, 0171 823 8818. Sale begins tomorrow with up to 30 per cent off current stock.

Flannels, Altrincham, Leeds and Manchester, enqs: 0161 237 9945. Sale starts tomorrow with 20-50 per cent discounts on men's and women's designer labels including Thierry Mugler, Jil Sander, Gucci, D&G and Armani.

Georgina von Etzdorf, 50 Burlington Arcade, London W1. Customers' preview 2-3 Jan, then from 4 Jan 30-40 per cent off stock. Best buys include velvet devoré scarves down from £180 to £99, velvet bouclé jacket down from £825 to £495.

Ghost, 13-14 Hinde St, London W1 and 36 Ledbury Road, London W1. Sale begins 29 Dec with 30 per cent and more off current stock. Best buys include satin sheath dress down from £145 to £99.

Giorgio Armani, 37 Sloane Street, London SW1, sale begins tomorrow with discounts on all stock.

Giulio, 26-32 King Street, Cambridge, CB1, 01223 316 100. Sale begins 3 Jan with 25-50 per cent off men's and women's designer wear including Hamnett, Helmut Lang and Costume Homme.

Gina Shoes, 189 Sloane St, London SW2, 0171 235 2932. Sale began on 20 Dec with reductions on shoes such as snake-skin strap high-heels from £225 to £139 and stretch pointy-toed knee-high boots from £450 to £295.

Gucci, 33 Old Bond Street, London W1 and 18 Sloane Street, SW1, sale begins on 1 Jan.

Hermès, 155 New Bond St, London W1 and 179 Sloane St, SW1. Sale begins 3 Jan until 10 Jan with 40 per cent off spring/summer 97 stock and 60 per cent off autumn/winter 96 stock, reductions apply to ready-to-wear and ladies shoes only.

Issey Miyake, 270 Brompton Rd, London SW3, 0171-581-3760. Sale starts tomorrow with 30 per cent reductions on autumn/winter stock. Purple prism dress, was £1,900, now £1,330.

Jones, 15 Floral Street (designer) and 13 Floral Street (streety), London 0171 240 8312. Sale begins 2 Jan, discounts start at 30 per cent, best buys include mens D&G suit from £455 to £318 and Bikkembergs hooded jacket from £345 to £240.

Joseph, 77 Fulham Rd, London SW3, 26 Sloane St, SW1, 23 Old Bond St, W1. Sale begins tomorrow with 30 per cent off Joseph own label and designer labels. Best buys include winter coats and leather pieces.

Joseph Azagury, 73 Knightsbridge, London SW3, 0171-259-6887. Sale begins 7 Jan with up to 40 per cent off selected autumn/winter styles such as high-heel, platform ankle boots reduced from £260 to £130.

Kit Mens and Womenswear, 12 Silver Walk, St Martins Sq, Leicester, 0116 2529 605. Sale begins 3 Jan with 30-50 per cent off Dexter Wong, D Squared, Exte, W&LT and Versus.

Koh Samui, 65 Monmouth Street, London WC2, 0171-240-4280. Sale starts tomorrow with up to 60 per cent reductions on designers including Copperwheat Blundell, Abe Hamilton, Christa Davis and David Purves. Clements Ribeiro black, sequinned, silk chiffon bias-cut dress reduced from £620 to £395.

Le Monde Menswear, 305 Tettenhall Road, Newbridge, Wolverhampton WV6 and 55 Victoria Street, Wolverhampton WV1. Sale starts 5 January with 30-50 per cent off menswear labels including R Newbold, Camper and Rockport.

Life, Birmingham (0121 633 0792), Manchester and Leeds (enqs 0161 237 9945). Sale starts first week in Jan with good reductions on sportswear brands including Tommy Hilfiger, Polo Ralph Lauren, Henri Lloyd and Schott.

Manhattan, 242 High Street, Slough, Berks, 01753 537 820, sale begins on 3 Jan with good discounts on menswear from Henri Lloyd, Lacoste and Calvin Klein.

Manolo Blahnik, 49 Old Church Street, London SW3. Sale begins 9 January with 45 per cent off winter stock and 50-60 per cent off previous collections. Best buys include Antonio Berardi "corset" mules from £270 to £150, and Cerruti high-cut shoe/boots from £365 to £200.

Margaret Howell, 29 Beauchamp Place, London SW3, 24 Brook Street W1, 0171-584-2462. Sale begins tomorrow with discounts from 30 per cent on current stock. Best buys include ballerina cardigan from £169 to £129.

Matches, 34, 37, 38-9 High St, Wimbledon Village, London SW19 and 13 Hill Street, Richmond, enqs: 0181 946 2540. Sale begins tomorrow until 25 Jan with discounts between 30 and 60 per cent on designer stock including Prada and Patrick Cox.

Max Mara, 32 Sloane Street, London SW1 and 153 New Bond Street. Sale begins tomorrow with discounts of 20-45 per cent on stock. The New Bond Street store closes on 6 Jan for refurbishment.

Michael Chell, Windsor (01753 862 589), Maidenhead (01628 672610), and Camberley (01276 676735). Sale starts tomorrow at all branches with discounts on menswear labels including Kenzo, Hugo Boss and Paul Smith.

Mulberry, 41-42 New Bond St, London W1, 11-12 Gees Court, W1. Sale begins tomorrow with up to 50 per cent off selected stock. Best buys include half-price luggage and a velvet halter-neck dress from £415 to £279.

Nicole Farhi, 11 Floral Street, London WC2, 158 New Bond St, W1, 193 Sloane Street. Sale now on with up to 30 per cent off stock. Best buys include winter coats.

Osprey, London W1, 0171-935-2824. Sale now on until end of January, 50-70 per cent off selected items.

Patrick Cox, 30 Sloane St, London SW1, 0171-235-5599. Sale begins tomorrow with reductions of up to 30 per cent off winter stock including lace-up knee-high boot with kitten heel from £335 to £234.

Paul Smith, 14-44 Floral St, London WC2 and nationwide, enqs: 0171-379-7133. Sale begins 3 Jan for four weeks with 30-50 per cent discounts on all collections.

Pellicano, 63 South Molton Street, London W1, 0171 629 2205. Sale begins tomorrow with 30 per cent off this season's stock including CB, Joelynian, Eric Bergere, Miu Miu, and Antonio Berardi. Bargains include brown cropped sheepskin jacket by Miu Miu from £1,200 to £450, Antonio Berardi grey mini kilt from £260 to £180.

Polo Ralph Lauren, 143 New Bond Street, London W1. Sale begins mid-Jan with 30-50 per cent off all winter stock.

Prada, 42-45 Sloane Street, SW1, 0171 235 0008. Sale begins 29 Dec with 20-50 per cent discount on all stock of menswear and womenswear, shoes and accessories.

The Designerwear Showroom, 17 Riding House Street, London W1, 0171 436 3175. Sale now on with 30-50 per cent off menswear labels including Armani, Moschino and Versace.

Sakks Manshop, Shamrock Quay, Southampton, 01703 637 892. Sale starts on 9 Jan with upto 50 per cent off menswear by Armani, Boss, Cerruti, Versace and Stone Island.

The Field, Reading (01734 590 810), Wokingham (01734 787872) and Henley (01491 414144). Sale starts 2 Jan with good discounts on menswear labels including Hugo Boss, Issey Miyake and Polo Ralph Lauren.

Repertoire, Beaconsfield (01494 681655), Marlow (01628 476 996) and Watford (01923 235445). Sale starts tomorrow with good discounts on menswear labels including Iceberg, Victor Victoria, Nicole Farhi and John Rocha.

Robert Old & Co, 20-21 Westover Road, Bournemouth 01202 290 832. Sale starts 8 Jan with 30-50 per cent off Ermenegildo Zegna, Versace Classic V2 and Iceberg.

View, 17 Hill Street, Richmond, Surrey, 0181 332 2726. Sale now on with discounts on men's and women's labels including Basi, Schott, Thomas Burberry and Jasper Conran.

Wade Smith, fashion store for men and women, Matthew Street, Cavern Quarter: Active Woman, Whitechapel and Wade Smith Junior, Paradise Street, all Liverpool, call 0151 255 1077. Sale starts tomorrow with 30-50 per cent off designer labels for men, women and children including Dolce & Gabbana, DKNY, Guess? and Victor Victoria.

Whistles, 12, St. Christopher's Place, London W1 and nationwide, enqs: 0171 487 4484. Sale now on with 20-50 per cent reductions on all items including wool stretch one-button jacket, was £235, now £164; matching skirt, was £110, now £55; stretch velvet bootleg pants, down from £115 to £92, stretch paisley shirt, was £115, now £57.

Woodies Emporium, 22-26 Morgan Arcade, Cardiff (01222 232171) and 16 The Triangle, Bristol (01179 292 519). Sale starts 22 Jan with 20-50 per cent off men's designer labels and accessories including Firetrap, Calvin Klein, Fred Perry, Full Circle, G-Shock and Napapijri.

Valentino, 174 Sloane Street, London SW1; 160 New Bond Street, W1, 0171 235 5855. Sale now on with 40 per cent off current stock and up to 60 per cent on previous collections. Best buy tiger-print coat, £1,820, narrow pants and embroidered top, £1,630.

Vivienne Westwood, men's accessories and Red Label: 44 Conduit Street, London W1, Gold Label: 6 Davies Street, W1. Sale starts 5 Jan with 30 per cent off all winter stock.

Xile, Unit 22, Waverley Market, Princes Street, Edinburgh, 0131 556 6508. Sale starts today with discounts on mens and womenswear starting at 20 per cent on selected items including Duffer, Diesel, Limehaus, Comme des Garçons and Dolce & Gabbana.

Yves Saint Laurent, Rive Gauche Men and Women, 33 Sloane St, London SW1 and 137, New Bond St, W1, 0171-493-2143. Sale begins tomorrow with 30-50 per cent off all winter stock. Men's single breasted pinstripe suit, was £750, now £375, women's wool knitted bootleg trousers, down from £395 to £235.

High Street and Miscellaneous

Biba, 18 Piccadilly Arcade, Jermyn St, London SW1, 0171-359-3699. Sale now on for one month with 50 per cent off winter stock. Rainbow velvet coat is reduced from £160 to £80.

Burberry, 18-22 Haymarket, London SW1, 165 Regent St, London W1, 0171 734 5928, sale begins tomorrow for three weeks with 30-50 per cent off stock. Best buys include classic men's trenchcoat from £625 to £395.

Cobra Sports, nationwide, enqs: 0181 847 4616. Sale begins tomorrow for three weeks with up to 50 per cent reductions on all major sports brands. Nike Air Triax from £79.99 to £49.99.

Ciro Pearls, 61, Brompton Road, London SW3, 0171589 5584. Sale begins 29 Dec with 50 per cent reductions on selected items of costume jewellery and 25 per cent off any existing sale items.

Clarks, branches nationwide, enqs: 0171371 9011. Sale now on until end of Jan with up to £15 discount on casual shoes and boots.

Country Casuals, branches nationwide, enqs: 0171 287 5181. Sale now on with discounts of up to 50 per cent on casualwear, soft tailoring, winter knitwear and accessories.

Diesel, 55 Neal Street, London WC2, enqs: 0171 836 2255. Sale begins tomorrow until 17 January with 30-50 per cent off all fashion items from the men's, women's and children's ranges, doesn't include denim.

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15/SALES GUIDE

Buffer of St. George, 29 Shorts Gardens, London WC2, 0171-379 4660. Sale begins 10 Jan with 20-50 per cent off. Own label fleeces, down from £85 to £65, original Cowboy chunky cardigans from £200 to £99.

East & East Additions, branches nationwide, enqs: 0181-877 0807. Sale starts tomorrow until mid-Jan with up to 50 per cent off all stock including handknit cardigans and velvet shirts.

Egg, 36, Kinnerton St, London SW1, 0171-235 9315. Sale begins in the first week of Feb for two weeks with 30-50 per cent off selected items.

Faith, nationwide, enqs: 0800-289297. Sale began 20 Dec, offering up to 50 per cent on selected footwear and bags.

Favourbrook, men's: 55 Jermyn Street, London SW1; waistcoats and accessories: 19-21 Piccadilly Arcade, SW1; women's: 18 Piccadilly Arcade, enqs: 0171-491 2337. Sale starts tomorrow until 31 Jan with 10 per cent off all women's and men's jackets, trousers and accessories and up to 50 per cent off waistcoats, which start at £120.

French Connection, branches nationwide, enqs: 0171-580 2507. Sale begins tomorrow with 30 per cent off all items from men's and women's collections. Best buys include women's double-breasted maxi coat from £200 to £140.


Next for children

French & Teague/1647, 69 Gloucester Ave, London NW1. Sale begins 2 Jan, with 30-50 per cent off current stock. Dupion silk reversible bronze/indigo opera coat, was £700, will be £400.

Gap, stores nationwide, enqs: 0800 427789. No sale as such but many items will be marked down on sale rails from tomorrow.

Gieves & Hawkes, 1 Savile Row, London W1, enqs: 0171-434 2001. Sale begins tomorrow until end of Jan in all stores. Best buys include blazers from £295 to £195, and suits from £495 to £295.

H&M Hennes, London, Leeds, Norwich and Birmingham, for local shop call 0171 255 2031. Sale now on.

Jeffrey Rogers, enqs: (01923) 474 400. Sale begins tomorrow with price cuts of 30-75 per cent on all stock. Best buys include assorted knitwear from £29.99 to £6.99 and jackets from £64.99 to £29.99.

Jigsaw, 43 branches nationwide, enqs: 0171-491 4484. Sale starts 7 Jan with discounts from 30 per cent on winter clothes.

John Lobb, 88 Jermyn St, London W1, 179 Sloane St, SW1. Sale begins 29 Dec with 30-50 per cent off a selection of traditional men's shoes. Best buys include classic brogues from £375 to £195 and boots from £420 to £255.

Karen Millen, branches nationwide, enqs: (01622) 664032. Sale starts tomorrow with 30-50 per cent off selected lines.

Kookai, enqs: 0171-937 4411. Sale begins tomorrow with discounts of up to 50 per cent. Best buys include double-breasted reefer-style coat from £160 to £69.



Polo Ralph Lauren, above left, and woman at Next, above right

Next, nationwide. Sale begins tomorrow with up to 50 per cent off all autumn/winter stock.

Oasis, nationwide. Sale begins tomorrow with up to 50 per cent off selected stock. Best buys include stretch velvet hipsters, originally £44.99, now £24.99. Final reductions will be on 29 Jan.

Office, branches across London, 0181-838 0070. Sale begins 2 Jan with reductions of up to 50 per cent on brands including Hush Puppy, Merrell, Napapijri, and Costume National.

Offspring, Neal St, London WC2. Sale begins 2 Jan with up to 50 per cent off sports brands.

Ouiset, 0171-255 5300. Sale starts today for one month, with discounts of up to 50 per cent.

Red Or Dead, enqs: 0114-723 7827. Sale begins tomorrow with up to 50 per cent reductions on everything.

The Scotch House, London and Edinburgh, enqs: 0171-581 2151. Sale starts tomorrow for three weeks with 30-40 per cent reductions on all stock including ladies' cashmere rollneck sweater from £165 to £125.

Wallis, branches nationwide, enqs: 0181-910 1333. Sale now on with up to 50 per cent off womenswear and accessories.

Windsmoor, branches nationwide, enqs: 0181-800 8022. Sale begins tomorrow.

Woodhouse, London and Manchester, enqs: 0171-629 1254. Sale now on with 20-30 per cent off menswear labels including Woodhouse own label, Stone Island and Armani.

Department Stores

Allders, The Whitgift Centre, Croydon, Surrey. Sale starts today, with 30-50 per cent discounts in all departments.

Army & Navy, Victoria, London SW1, 0171-834 1234. Sale begins tomorrow with discounts from 20-50 per cent in all departments.

Barkers, Kensington High Street, London W8, 0171-937 5432. Sale begins tomorrow with discounts from 20-50 per cent in all departments.

Bhs, nationwide, enqs: 0171-262-3288. Sale commences today until 19 Jan with up to 50 per cent off selected items.

Debenhams, branches nationwide, sale begins tomorrow with 30-50 per cent off selected items.

DH Evans, Oxford Street, London W1, 0171-629 8800. Sale begins tomorrow with 20-50 per cent off selected items.

Dickins & Jones, Regent St, London W1. Sale begins tomorrow with discounts and special offers in menswear, womenswear and childrenswear departments.

Fortnum & Mason, 181 Piccadilly, London W1. Sale starts 30 Dec with discounts from 25-50 per cent off selected items from men's, women's, children's and gift sections. Food items are not on sale.

Fenwicks, New Bond Street, London W1, 0171-629 9161. Sale begins tomorrow with 30-50 per cent off current stock including Jasper Conran evening dress from £249 to £125 and Kenzo man's suit from £399 to £279.

Harrods, Knightsbridge, London SW1, 0171-730 1234. Sale begins at 9am on 7 Jan and continues until 31 Jan across all departments. Womenswear collections offer up to 50 per cent off labels such as Prada. Best buys: grey woollen skinny-rib top from £204 to £140 and discounts on Helmut Lang menswear, single-breasted suit from £829 to £579.

Harvey Nichols, Knightsbridge, London SW1, 0171-235 5000. Sale begins tomorrow with up to 50 per cent off items in all departments. Bargains include Dolce & Gabbana men's cashmere jumper from £365 to £182 and women's Galliano ruffle dress from £1,025 to £512.

House of Fraser, sale starts today in Scotland and continues until 24 Jan; in England and Wales sale begins tomorrow, until 24 Jan, with 20-50 per cent off selected items.

John Lewis department stores, nationwide, enqs: 0171-828 1000. Clearance sale begins 29 Dec with bargains available in all depatments, womenswear sale items include 100 per cent wool jackets reduced from £95 to £65 and classic merino knitwear from £25 to £15.

Liberty, Regent Street, London, W1, 0171-734 1234. Sale begins tomorrow with up to 50 per cent off throughout all departments, reductions in women's fashion include Nicole Farhi tunic from £149 to £74.50 and menswear Ralph Lauren polo shirts from £60 to £35.

Marks & Spencer, on sale nationwide from tomorrow with 30 per cent discounts on all end-of-season stock.

Selfridges, 400 Oxford Street, London W1, enqs: 0171-318 3562. Sale begins tomorrow with reductions throughout the store, with discounts of up to 50 per cent in men's and women's fashions, such as Katherine Hamnett velvet wrap coat reduced from £539 to £99.

Miscellaneous

Aero, 96 Westbourne Grove, London W2, enqs: 0171-221 950. Sale begins 3 Jan until 1 Feb, discounts of up to 30 per cent off furniture, lighting and accessories for the home.

The Body Shop, nationwide, enqs: 01903 731 500. A good buy is White Musk Eau de Toilette, reduced by 50 per cent.

B&Q, branches nationwide, enqs: 0171-465 7700. Sale begins tomorrow until 8 Feb, reductions in all departments with best buys in kitchens, tiling and interiors departments.

Courts, branches nationwide, enqs: 0181-640 3322. Sale begins tomorrow, with up to 50 per cent reductions on selected three-piece suites.

Habitat, branches nationwide, enqs: 0171-255 2545. Sale from tomorrow to 25 January, reductions on upholstery, furniture, lighting, decoration and bedlinen, best buys on sofa beds.

Heal's, branches in London and Guildford, enqs: 0171-636 1666. Sale from tomorrow to 18 Jan. Reductions in all departments, up to 50 per cent off some discontinued lines and 15 per cent off selected ranges of furniture, upholstery and beds.

HMV, 150 Oxford Street, London W1, 0171-631 3423. Sale from tomorrow to mid-January, albums from £9.99, videos from £8.99.

Ikea, branches nationwide, enqs: 0181-208 5600. Sale from tomorrow to 18 Jan, reductions in many departments, including 40 per cent off Jussi dining table in white and Mira beds.

Mulberry Hall, Stonegate, York, and mail order, (01904) 620736. Reductions in all departments, good buys on Spode Bordeaux dinner sets and Stuart crystal.

MFI, nationwide, enqs: 0990 634634. Sale from today to 31 Jan, reductions on beds and upholstery, up to 50 per cent off fitted kitchens and bedrooms.

Purves & Purves, enqs: 0171-580 8223. Sale starts 27 Dec for three weeks, with 10 per cent off British and international furniture above £500.

Tower Records, One Piccadilly, London W1, 0171-439 2500. Sale from 31 Dec to 26 Jan, with reductions on books, CDs, tapes and accessories.

WH Smith, branches nationwide. Sale from tomorrow, reductions on music, videos and stationary. Up to 50 per cent off some gift ranges and Christmas products.


Man at Next

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Girl Power: just slogan spice or is it really happening?

It was the noisiest selling line of the year, and the most successful. But is there such a power? What does it mean? And did Spice advance the cause? Interviews by *Nicole Veash and Xenia Gregoriadis.*

Jilly Cooper, bestselling novelist

The Spice Girls are fun and harmless and I wish good luck to them but "girl power", it really means nothing to me. That's not to say that I warmed to 1970s feminism. Absolutely not. That was all about defeminisation, it was anti-glamour, anti-makeup. They grew the hair on their legs and under their armpits and they even burned their bras. In that respect I think the Spice Girls are far more healthy because they say people can look attractive if they want. Something beautiful should be allowed to be beautiful if it wants to be. My idea of womanhood is embodied by Joanna Lumley. Jo is perfect and so good. She runs around doing everything for everybody. Sheer wonderful beauty and charm. She's very clever, she makes wonderful television programmes, she's the best thing ever. She's kind, intelligent, sweet and warm. She's got a wonderful sense of humour and does so much for charity – and she looks absolutely stunning for her age. And that is real girl power.

John Lyttle, *Independent* gay columnist

Girl power definitely means something to me. I've only got to look at my five-year-old niece, who kicks her elder brothers and says "girl power" while she does it. That cheers me up immensely.

If a boy hits her she will hit him back with one of her dolls. Once a little boy showed her his peepee and said: "I've got a peepee and you haven't" and she said: "I've got a ponytail and you haven't."

Girls are definitely running the show. They are not timid and they have a real sense of themselves and their gender at the age of five, which is a great thing. So there has definitely been a cultural shift.

The Spice Girls are pop culture's manifestation of feminism. It is a way of making financial gains out of the ideas of feminism. I'm not totally keen on that because it is just another form of exploitation. My idea of girl power is Sharon Stone in *Basic Instinct*. I think every little girl should be given an ice pick at birth.

The girl power thing goes a lot deeper than the Spice Girls and marketing hype. There is a change in atmosphere and that has been a long time in coming. We won't see the real benefits for another 10-15 years. And God help the man who asks my niece out when she's in her 20s.

Joan Smith, *Independent on Sunday* columnist

Girl power is a cheap and silly way of describing a real change in women's lives, but it has been refracted and distorted through the mirror of popular culture. The great campaigns of the 1960s and 1970s have come to fruition today. Younger women don't face the same prejudice that my generation faced when we grew up. They are much more confident that I was at that age. But then they are not politicised like we were. When I was 10 I was being discriminated against because of my gender and this made me a lot more aware of the struggle to get equality.

Although things are a lot better now there are still battles to be won, like women getting into the higher echelons of all sides of life. I wonder how they will cope when they are 30 and they hit the glass ceiling. Today women grow up with the assumption that everything is equal, so it may come as a real shock.

When girls behave badly they are showing that not only men can fill that sort of role. It is a sign of barriers being broken down. They probably think feminism is outdated and they may wonder why people like me still bang on about sex discrimination.

The Spice Girls have taken a real historical change and packaged it in the blandest of ways. Underneath all those layers of marketing you can see something of real significance.

Chris Eubank, former world champion boxer

I believe in equality all the way. But there's not enough around. To impregnate the subconscious of girls or women with the attitude that you have got power is a very good thing. Success is all about confidence. If the Spice Girls or any type of fad can give a woman even a superficial belief or inspiration in herself then that's fantastic and I'm all for it.

Girl power is a fantastic thing but then so is boy power, general power. I suppose that girls need it a bit more than boys because the rhythm of things in our society means that the female is somehow made to feel a little bit lesser than the male.

The Spice Girls are using what they have. I use my fists. They look good, so they use their sex appeal and their voices. It's a good lesson to use what you have to become powerful.

Power can be manifested in hundreds of different ways. It can be subtle, it can be aggressive. The singer Gabrielle is powerful in the sweetness of her voice and music. She may not be aggressive outwardly but the way she deports herself is powerfully solid. She is very feminine.

Girl and boy power comes from inner strength and humility. Greatness is humility. Girls need to find a trade, find a subject, get an education and be strong in what they know.

Just look at Margaret Thatcher. The fact that she's a woman made no difference to her position. It takes intellect to get to her position. She was powerful because she knew how to be successful in her particular trade.

Suzanne Moore, *Independent* commentator

The Spice Girls have just reinforced a mood that has been around for some time. These days young girls have a lot of loyalty towards each other.

There is definitely a girl power thing around at the moment. Girls are doing better than boys at school and they are in demand in the workplace. They don't accept that anything is boys only. They play football, they ask boys out and they do it with a lot of confidence. They think nothing is going to be denied to them on the grounds of their gender. They tend to stick together and don't dump one another for boys. But this mood has been growing for a while. The Spice Girls just used some clever marketing to catch on to this.

Blake Morrison, poet and writer

It's a real pity that the girl power phenomenon has been attached to the Spice Girls, because it reduces it to just a pop slogan with no real substance. However, young women are definitely more confident than their mothers were. But I prefer to look at it as women power. Women are everywhere now. I have a female publisher and a female agent and I sometimes work for a female editor, so there has definitely been a real shift. In the 1970s women would never have been in any position of influence, but in many sections of society this has changed for good.

I don't like that aggressive, noisy side of girl power. I've never liked men getting rowdy and going to pubs, so I don't see why I should like women doing the same. I suppose that is an inevitable part of egalitarianism, but that's not where real power for women lies.

If men see women behave like that, they inevitably fall back on old prejudices about women being slags. Real power is economic power and freedom from domesticity. Women shouldn't have to be superwomen. Going to the pub is not liberation and it just reinforces those old prejudicial stereotypes.

Elizabeth Beresford, creator of Alderney Womble, the newest addition to The Womble family

The Wombles are creatures that live on Wimbledon Common and spend their time clearing rubbish from the land.

This womble was created for the little boys and girls that live on Alderney in the Channel Islands, where I live. They are so cut off that some of them have never seen a double decker bus or even an elevator.

When I first wrote the series in the early 1970s, the only female womble was Madame Cholet. But there was a real need for another younger girl womble, who is less matriarchal and traditional than she is.

Alderney is a very modern girl Womble. She's very different from Madame Cholet. She goes around on a skateboard and she doesn't take herself too seriously. She does the same things as the male wombles. Madame Cholet still stays at home and makes clover buns, but Alderney is out there working hard with the other Wombles tidying up Wimbledon Common.

She is very confident, so I suppose she has been influenced by girl power. She has got two bunches on top of her hat which stick right up, like the Spice Girls, but they are a bit past it now, aren't they?

Professor Roger Scruton, philosopher

It is always hard to say whether girl power or the Spice Girls will have any lasting impact on our culture. But one thing is incredible.

Just think about a group of girls pulling faces and sticking their tongues out with such insolence and then think about the plaudits they received afterwards. They were courted by Blair and Major and they were called amazing just because they were so yobbish.

It is amazing to think that a nation watched them and this has got to have a significant political and historical impact on our culture in the long run. It shows that if you are insolent and you are attractive – which applies to very few people – then you can make an impact on the most important people of the day. Can you imagine Gladstone or Disraeli fooling around with a bunch of girls like that?

Jeremy Issacs, former head of Channel 4 and the Royal Opera House

I have always been in favour of giving talented women responsibility. In the mid-1970s when I was director of programmes for Thames television I advanced Verity Lambert up the career ladder then I hired Liz Forgan when I set up Channel 4 in 1980. But I find the Spice Girls absolutely terrifying. My four-year-old granddaughter had a birthday party recently and she and her friends were bopping all over the place making a terrible racket. I just had to run away and hide.

Sadie Plant, cyberfeminist

There's a lot of marketing hype and brashness around girl power. But having said that something new has become clear during the past year. There is a confidence among young women, for example girls are doing better than boys at school. The Spice Girls have picked up on these sentiments, but it is difficult to separate this pop phenomenon from tendencies of real significance.

Girl power is different from 1970s feminism. Instead of saying women are starting from a disadvantaged point, young girls grow up with brash self-confidence.

There is definitely an increased lack of respect for old taboos. Like the way girls and young women should be demure or non-aggressive, which I think is a good thing.

In my generation, these taboos were broken self-consciously, whereas young women today are not even aware of them.

I don't know whether girl power will be remembered. It is certainly not a movement, because the days of movements and campaigns are all over.

Some of the most advanced things on the net have been done by women. They are moving away from a typically masculine way of doing things and are exercising power on their terms.

A lot of features on the net are more suited to the way women work. For example, on the net you can assume a lot of different personas and women are quite used to doing this, they are mothers, wives and daughters. It's also like putting make-up on and changing your appearance.

The net is also a bit like a horizontal gossip network, without the constraints of older, hierarchical methods of communication.

Norman Rosenthal, exhibitions secretary of the Royal Academy.

I recently interviewed four women and four men for a job. All the women were really confident and all the men looked self-defeated, which I found extraordinary.

Twenty years ago there seemed to be fewer women of any merit who seemed to make real art. Of course there have always been female artists of distinction but they are the exception. I have been criticised for not including women artists in exhibitions. It wasn't that I didn't want any, it was just that they appeared to me, by and large, not to have the strength of male artists, particularly in the early 1980s.

Since the 1980s they have found a way of standing up to men and of being noticed. Now they are greatly valued because they have broken into visual arts in a strong way and there is nothing between them and their male counterparts. For example, Rachel Whiteread and Damien Hirst are probably the most representative artists of their generation in Britain. And they just happen to be a man and a woman.

Yvette Cooper, Labour MP

I was visiting a class in my Pontefract constituency and the teacher told me that 60 per cent of the girls had achieved five or more grades A-C at GCSE, while just 30 per cent of boys had achieved the same grades. That is a shocking discrepancy. The girls I meet are a lot more confident, while the boys are generally withdrawn and spend their time playing pool.

I think it is wonderful for girls to have more confidence and be more assertive than they were 10 or 20 years ago. But at the same time I am worried about the boys, because they seem to be seriously underachieving.

But the Spice Girls are about something different. They have communicated with the under-sevens and given them real confidence which of course is a good thing. But they also have an aggressive, grabbing side, which I don't like.

The older girls have been influenced by some kind of different generational change. They have stepped on the shoulders of their mothers. But the younger girls have been affected by something different, the sentiment expressed by the Spice Girls.

On balance I don't think girl power indicates any great corner has been turned. It is just a generational thing that was bound to happen when you look at what has come before.

Vanessa Redgrave, actress

Look, there are much more significant things to life than this ridiculous girl-power thing. At the moment I'm writing something extremely important about asylum which could actually help people and I can't dedicate my mind to thinking about girl power.

Lara Croft, Tomb Raider heroine

Being an adventurer I have to be very confident. If anybody stands in the way of my career I will definitely deal with them. I am very single-minded and independent and I suppose a lot of girls can identify with that.

I can be quite aggressive, but I still retain my feminine charms. I would always shave my legs. Of course I am aware of the Spice Girls. Some people have called me Digital Spice. Sure I've got the same confidence they have, but I'm definitely not such an attention seeker.

THE MEANINGS OF CHRISTMAS

The Old Testament and the New tell a single story. God, as creator and as redeemer, has a unified plan, says *Margaret Atkins.*

"There was weeping at the death of Jacob, but there was joy at the death of Stephen." Thus wrote John, an eighth century monk from Damascus. Today, the Church celebrates the death of St Stephen, the first Christian martyr; the early Christians themselves called it his "birthday". For the patriarchs of the Old Testament, death was an occasion for grief, but the followers of this new age are to rejoice when the saints die.

John Damascene recognised the paradox. He wanted to startle his readers into sharing his own overwhelming awareness of the cosmic transfiguration effected on the first Christmas.

It would be possible to take a minimalist attitude to the incarnation: the Son of God became human in order to gather together a few believers, but other than that nothing has changed. For them Jesus saves, and the rest of the world carries on much as before.

John, however, was a maximalist: when God, in Christ, took human nature as his own, everything changed. People and places, plants and animals, wood and precious stones, oil and water and bread, all of these were illuminated by his coming. The shockwaves penetrated deep beneath the surface – the shape of our relationships, the cast of our imaginations, the very pattern of our logic were transformed by the coming of Christ.

John's immediate concern in formulating his thought in this way was to defend the use of icons in worship, which had been banned by the emperor in Constantinople. The imperial logic was this: "Images had been banned in the Old Testament, so how could they be venerated now? Surely God is unlimited. If you cannot even draw a line around him, how can you possibly draw him?"

John replied with the paradox of the Word made flesh: "When he who is ... immeasurable in the boundlessness of his own nature ... empties himself and takes the form of a servant, then you may draw his image and show it to anyone willing to gaze upon it." God's own action has transformed the very logic of our language about him. We have learnt to say that the invisible Son was seen, the immortal Son suffered death. We have had to learn to see his majesty in his humility, and his power working through his merciful love.

But surely it is idolatrous to worship mere matter? "I do not worship matter," John replied. "I worship the creator of matter who became matter for my sake, who ... worked out my salvation through matter." It is not that the material world is divine, but that God has stooped to enter his own creation. Consequently, the Christian must show reverence not only to the Creator, but also to his creatures. Mary is to be honoured, because the flesh that the Word took was hers. The saints are to be honoured, because they are his friends. Nazareth and Gethsemane are to be honoured, because he walked there. The material world itself is to be treated with reverence, because its very elements sustained his human life. The world has become charged with his presence, as iron becomes red-hot in a fire.

That is also why the Christian prince must revere the pauper: hence Good King Wenceslas on the Feast of Stephen. Actually, he was a prince, and the story in the carol turns out to be a later invention. But Wenceslas has indeed been remembered since the 10th century as a good Christian ruler, who cared practically for the poor and suffering. His legend grew, but the essential shape of Christian love, humble and reverent, remained.

John of Damascus, ironically, was safe to attack the Christian emperor because he was writing from Jerusalem under Muslim rule. Yet he seems a poor model for inter-faith dialogue. He excepted the Jews from the honour due to the rest of humanity because, he argued, they had rejected salvation. Moreover, his emphasis on the power of the incarnation could scandalise non-Christians. Is it not safer to go along with the minimalist and play down the effect of Christmas?

The problem with the minimalist view is that creation and salvation seem unconnected, as if God is working on two separate projects. But the incarnation makes sense only in the light of creation: the Word through whom all things were made came to dwell among us. It is because God has already created out of purposeful love that he wishes to dignify his creation by dwelling within it. Through the incarnation Christians have learnt to honour people and paintings; and in doing so we are sharing and fulfilling the Jews' faith in their Creator.

For a Christian the Old Testament and the New tell a single story. God, as Creator and as Redeemer, has a unified plan. There is joy at the death of Stephen, because its purpose has been restored to the creation: not death, but everlasting life with God.

Margaret Atkins is a lecturer in theology at Trinity & All Saints College, Leeds.

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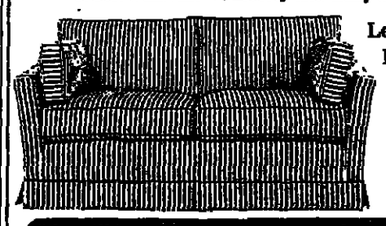

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Little seasonal cheer as Footsie suffers its worst Christmas

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

INDICES

FTSE 100 5013.9 down 35.9

FTSE 250 4698.1 down 8.2

FTSE 350 2413.5 down 14.8

Dow Jones

Nikkei 14924.98 up 125.58

Hang Seng 10342.44 down 25.66

Shares failed to hit the festive jackpot this year. Usually they enjoy a spectacular spree in the Christmas run-up. Indeed a way to have made money in most years in the past two decades has been to buy Footsie as the second half of December arrived.

But not this year. On Christmas Eve the blue-chip index fell 35.9 points to 5,013.9. At one time it was down 45.2.

So, unless there is a more rewarding display next week, the yearly Footsie gamble will have been lost.

In the second part of the month Footsie has so far witnessed a 31.3 decline. It has, however, achieved a 182.1 gain since December dawned, drawing its strength in the first few days of the month.

The Christmas Eve display was the worst on the last trading day before Christmas since the Footsie was created in 1984.

New York's overnight decline ensured what is always little more than a token session opened hesitantly. With most offices operating with skeleton staffs and only a few fund managers bothering to leave the comfort of their homes there was little buying interest. Seaq volume was 241.6 million.

Sears, the struggling retailer which sold another chunk of its once renown shoe empire on Tuesday, accounted for 38 million. A single unmatched trade, possibly a bed and breakfast deal, of 37.7 million shares was the decisive influence. The price was a shade over 47p. It left Sears off 1p at 49.5p.

Premier Asset Management, a venture capitalist-style operation which used to be called Gabriel Trust, was responsible, if the publication was correct, for a further 28 million. The price held at 15.75p.

There was, however, considerable volatility as the market drew towards its traditional lunch time close. Order-driven trading was to blame; there did not appear to be many large trades in the final 30 minutes.

Blue Circle Industries celebrated its quick return to Footsie with a 6p gain to 338p and **Rolls-Royce**, up 2p at 230p, continued to draw strength from the Henderson Crosthwaite buy circular.

RioTinto, the resources group, had a bumpy ride although there was little trading. The shares fell 30.5p to 705p, just above their year's low. The group's 67 per cent owned **Cameleo** off-shoot is buying control of an Italian aluminium refinery.

Two of Tuesday's best performers, insurer **Sun Life & Provincial** and mobile phone group **Vodafone**, gave ground. Sun Life fell 24p to 416p and Vodafone 10.5p to 440p.

Cadbury Schweppes had an unseasonable time, off 11.5p to 601p. It has been ruffled by **Coca-Cola**'s £500m swoop on **Orangina**, the French soft drink group owned by **Pernod Ricard**. Pernod is thought to be putting together a war chest to bid for some of **Diageo**'s brands, such as Dewar's, the top selling Scotch whisky in the US.

Retailers remained unsettled on the early arrival of the "January" sales with **Dixons** down 6p at 602p. But **International Greetings** rose 15p to 442.5p after reporting Christmas sales of its cards, gift ware and crackers were up 10 per cent from last year.

Danka Business Systems had another poor session. Hit for six when it produced a surprise profit warning the shares had staged a modest recovery. Now it is being sued by US investors for allegedly making misleading statements.

Its warning last week sent the shares crashing 292.5p to 217.5p. They have since clawed their way back to 348.5p. The legal action pushed them to 222.5p. In the summer the shares were 787.5p.

Biocompatibles International, the hard-pressed health care group, managed a 27.5p gain to 455p, presumably a knee jerk reaction to a modest US buy. **Galen**, the health care group which this week arrived in the FTSE 250 index, added 14p to 338.5p and media buyer **Aegis** hardened 0.5p to 67.5p after the FMR investment group picked up nearly 1 per cent, taking its stake to 5.07 per cent.

There was a smattering of action on the under card. **Fairway**, a printer, jumped 21p to 61.5p following a bid approach and **Tepnel Life Sciences**, the health group suffering from a boardroom split, rose 5.5p to 37.5p.

Abacus Recruitment, which recently said profits were running ahead of expectations, put on 26p to a 260p peak.

Helical Bar, the property group, held at 558p. It has sold a London office property to a German group for £27m. **Forth Ports** remained at 615p after the Scottish Office made favourable noises about its ambitious Leith waterfront development.

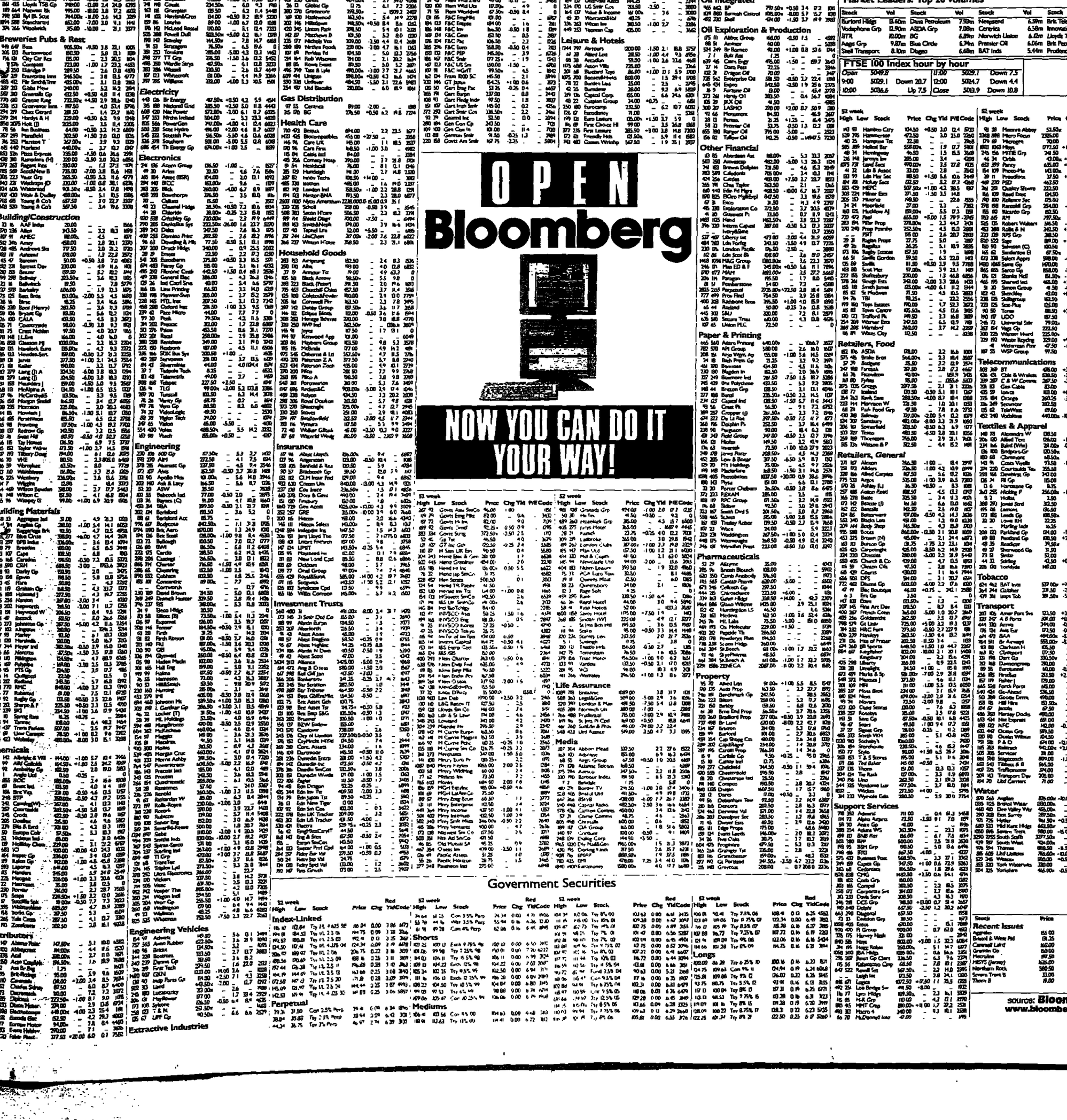
Manders, the ink group, was unchanged at 245p as bidder **Flint Ink**, a US group, picked up 8.27 per cent of the capital at 248p.

TAKING STOCK

London & Edinburgh Publishing held at 6.5p. It has had a tough time since it arrived last year at 10p; missing its prospectus profit forecast and then going into the red. But the arrival of John Webber as chairman and David Ellingham as his deputy promised better times. On Christmas Eve came the first outward sign of action. L&E is raising £90,000 by selling shares at 6p and is in talks to buy another company.

Barbican Healthcare is paying £2.15m for two dental businesses, Corporate Dental Services and M Spencer-Swaine. Its shares added 2p to 44.5p.

A share buy-in by financial group BWD Securities. It purchased 5.03 per cent of its capital at 121p a share. The price rose 1.5p to 120p.



Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is the latest twelve months' declared gross dividend as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding extraordinary items but including exceptionals. Gilt Prices are Bloomberg Generics. Other dealer Ex rights: x Ex-dividend; a Ex-all; s Suspended; p Partly Paid; np Nil Paid; *AIM.

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Market Leaders: Top 20 volumes

at 2:00pm 23/12

Stock	Vol	Stock	Vol	Stock	Vol	Stock	Vol
Burford Hldgs	8.60m	Dana Petroleum	7.93m	Neopend	6.39m	Brit Telecom	5.13m
Vodaphone Grp	12.90m	ASDA Grp	7.08m	Centrica	6.58m	Innovative Tec	5.12m
BTR	10.00m	BG	6.89m	Norwich Union	6.12m	Lloyds TSB	5.06m
Aegis Grp	9.87m	Blue Circle	6.74m	Premier Oil	6.06m	Brit Petroleum	5.04m
Shell Transport	8.10m	Diageo	6.68m	BAT Inds	5.44m	Prudential Corp	4.80m

FTSE 100 Index hour by hour

Open	5049.8		11:00	5029.1	Down 7.5
9:00	5029.1	Down 20.7	12:00	5024.7	Down 4.4
10:00	5036.6	Up 7.5	Close	5013.9	Down 10.8

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Perpetual							
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Shorts							
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Mediums							
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Longs							
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

Stock	Price	Chg(p)
Recent Issues		
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

source: Bloomberg
www.bloomberg.com

One Man's fortunes to take a Rough turn at Kempton

A year ago, One Man trounced Rough Quest in the King George VI Chase, but as *Greg Wood* suggests, different ground conditions today might create a very different result – and at rewarding odds.

The betting might imply that One Man is effectively home and dry in the King George VI Chase this afternoon, but "dry" is very much the operative word. The easy winner in each of the last two seasons he may be, but if the rain which fell on Kempton in the days before Christmas has got in to the ground, One Man may stop very suddenly just when he should be accelerating. For a huge crowd still carrying a stone or so overweight in turkey and trimmings, this would do nothing to aid the digestion.

So pronounced are One Man's stamina limitations that you could pinpoint to within a stride or two the moment when he started to flag 12 months ago. At the time, he was so far ahead – Mr Mulligan, the subsequent Gold Cup winner, had just fallen when a clear second – that it did not matter, and the bare form offers no reason why either Rough Quest (second) or Barton Bank (third) should turn the tables today. Crucially, though, that race was on ground described officially as good to firm, and to judge by the winning time that day, very much on the firm side of that. On good to soft, or softer, the result could be very different, and as the last two Gold Cups have demonstrated, when One Man stops, he stops for good.

Whether Rough Quest – or See More Business, who also needs soft ground – will even line up will not be decided finally until this morning, which makes this a difficult race to analyse in detail. It seems likely, though, that the ground will have too much give for Senor El Betrutti, an impressive and improving winner twice already this season, while Yorkshire Gale and Djeddah are out of their depth, and Challenger Du Luc has developed galloping seconditis.

It is four years since Barton Bank won this race, and three since he fell at the last with victory assured, but odds of 5-1 about a horse with just one victory in nine outings over the last two seasons are far too short. If One Man is poor value at 11-8 – and he is – this leaves **Rough Quest** (next best, 2.20) as an outstanding bet at around 9-1 if he lines up, and Suny Bay, the Hennessy winner, as the one to be on if he does not.

The best bet of all on the holiday card is **SECRET SPRING** (nap 1.45), who ran Sanmartino very close in the novice hurdle over course and distance a year ago and was given a very gentle seasonal re-introduction at Cheltenham last month. He was still travelling sweetly with two flights to jump, something which would not normally escape the attention of the odds-compilers, so it is a welcome surprise to find 5-1 available about him this morning.

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: One Man
(Kempton 2.20)
NB: Secret Spring
(Kempton 1.45)

Some very desperate people will be watching the novice hurdle which opens the card. They are the ones who backed Zaralaska down to low double figures for the Champion Hurdle before his unfortunate defeat – at odds of 1-5 – by Wahiba Sands recently, and nothing but victory will do today if he is to stand any chance at Cheltenham in March. Some other useful Flat performers are in opposition today, but both Royal Gait and Alderbrook were beaten in novice hurdles before going on to win as novices at the Festival, and **Zaralaska** (12.40) deserves another chance.

The Feltham Novices' Chase, the main supporting race on the card, is not really one on which to risk money, since at least four of the runners have fair claims, although Fiddling The Facts is probably the most promising of all, and should at least confirm the form of her recent defeat of Ottowa, even on 7lb worse terms.

Elsewhere on one of racing's busiest days of the year, the Rowland Meyrick Handicap Chase at Wetherby has attracted an excellent field, including Sparky Gayle, who disappointed when favourite for the Murphy's Gold Cup, and another of last season's most promising novices, **Colonel In Chief** (2.25). The latter should probably have beaten Strath Royal over course and distance earlier this month, and is unlikely to return empty handed today. Wincanton, too, has much to offer refugees from the leftovers, with Stately Home, **Northern Starlight** (1.55) and Around the Gale among the runners for the Mid Season Chase, not to mention a 14-runner field for the Gold Card Hurdle Qualifier which offers optimists and pin-stickers a chance to recoup the Christmas expenses in one inspired hit.

Suny shines: Impressive in his work at home, Suny Bay may have to give best to Rough Quest at Kempton today

Photograph: Robert Hallam

Sheikh stands by his threat

Sheikh Mohammed reiterated his threat to withdraw his family's horses in training in Britain unless prize money levels improve in a meeting with the British Horseracing Board chief executive, Tristram Ricketts, in Dubai this week.

In a statement issued on Christmas Eve, Ricketts said: "Sheikh Mohammed re-emphasised to me a number of key messages. First, that he is speaking on behalf of his family who all share the views expressed in the Gimcrack speech. Secondly, everybody should understand that he and his family really do mean what was said.

"Thirdly, that they are deeply concerned about the low levels of prize money in this country and want to see steady progress towards significant improvements in these levels for the benefit of all owners and of racing in general."

While unable to offer a quick-fix solution, Ricketts told the Sheikh of "the steps which the BHB is taking to approach Government again" to highlight the problems and possible ways to address them.

MARKET RASEN

HYPERION

12.30 Toulston Lady 1.0 Dandy Des Plauts 1.35 Price's Hill 2.05 Colour Code 2.35 Dana Point 3.05 Non Vintage 3.35 Baher

GOING: Chase course: Heavy (Soft in back straight). Hurdle course: Soft (Good to soft in straight).

● Right-hand, sharp, undulating circuit. Run-in of one furlong.

● Course is E of town on A631. ADMISSION: Club £12.50; Tattersalls £8.50 (OAPs who are members of courses Jubilee Club half-price); Silver Ring £5 (Jubilee Club OAPs half-price). CAR PARK: Free.

● LEADING TRAINERS: Mrs M Reveley 23-98 (23.5%), M Pipe 16-69 (23.2%), J FitzGerald 14-86 (16.3%), K Morgan 14-118 (11.8%).

● LEADING JOCKEYS: P Niven 20-116 (17.2%), L Wyer 19-99 (19.2%), W Worthington 8-147 (5.4%), D Byrne 7-65 (10.8%).

● FAVOURITES: 203-583 (34.8%).

BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Marchant Ming (2.35).

12.30 MISTLETOE SELLING HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS G) £2,000 2m 1f 110yds

1	651-F0	LUCY TUFTY (157) (CD) J Pearce 5 11 10	J Ryan
2	1F0-4	TOULSTON LADY (16) J Wharton 5 11 8	W Marston
3	420333	THOMAS CROWN (15) M R Bosley 5 11 6	R Studholme (7)
4	000-20	AFRICAN SUN (43) M Chapman 4 11 3	W Worthington
5	46-P00	BAASM (17) J Norton 4 11 3	Mr K R O'Ryan (7)
6	-10533	OAKBURY (14) (CD) Miss L Siddall 5 11 2	T Siddall (7)
7	005040	BRANDON BRIDGE (15) D Geraghty 6 10 6	J Magee (3)
8	4-0P	CHIPALATA (16) T Donnelly 4 10 5	J Supple
9	00-P	TUDOR FALCON (29) P Bradley 4 10 3	D Parker B

– 9 declared –

BETTING: 5-2 Oakbury, 7-2 Toulston Lady, 9-2 Thomas Crown, African Sun, 13-2 Lucy Tufty, 8-1 Baasm, 12-1 Brandon Bridge, 16-1 others

1.00 BRUCE & JOE CARR NOVICE HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS E) £4,400 3m 1f

1	306-F1	BASSENHALLY (34) (CD) Mrs P Sly 7 11 11	W Marston
2	424U-4	EASY BREEZY (10) C Mann 7 11 9	J Magee (3)
3	342-32	PEARL'S CHOICE (11) J McConnochie 9 11 8	2nd pref
4	34F-24	BE BRAVE (8) T Etherington 7 11 2	D Parker
5	5020-0	LARKSHILL (20) J FitzGerald 6 11 2	J Supple
6	0/03-3	SIRERIC (15) S Bell 7 10 11	2nd pref
7	40-5FF	DANDY DES PLAUTS (16) Mrs S Smith 6 10 6	G F Ryan (5)
8	1/P3-1	MARKET GOSSIP (21) (D) R Alner 7 10 5	Mr J Tizzard (5)
9	P0233-	RECORD LOVER (284) M Chapman 7 10 0	W Worthington
10	056FF/	ASK FOR BARNEY (807) B Rothwell 6 10 0	W Dwan

– 10 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weight: Ask For Barney 9st 6lb.

BETTING: 9-4 Bassenhally, 3-1 Market Gossip, 9-2 Pearl's Choice, 7-1 Easy Breezy, 8-1 Be Brave, 12-1 Sireric, Record Lover, 16-1 others

1.35 LINCOLNSHIRE NATIONAL (H'CAP CHASE) (CLASS C) £13,000 4m 1f

1	6-U61P	HILLWALK (25) R Curtis 11 11 10	J Magee (3)
2	5/21-6	PRICE'S HILL (20) (BF) K Bailey 10 11 3	P Henley (3)
3	543425	MASTER BOSTON (20) R Woodhouse 9 10 11	W Dwan
4	14-F42	CATS RUN (27) (C) J Upson 9 10 11	W Marston
5	603312	D'ARBLAY STREET (25) W Kemp 8 10 0	D Finnegan (7) B
6	0/511-	CERIDWEN (322) T Greathead 7 10 0	W Worthington
7	4UP-0R	WOODLANDS GENHIRE (42) P Pritchard 12 10 0	D Parker B

– 7 declared –

D'Arblay Street 9st 13lb, Ceridwen 9st 11lb, Woodlands Genhire 8st 12lb

BETTING: 11-4 Cats Run, D'Arblay Street, 3-1 Price's Hill, 9-2 Hillwalk, 7-1 Master Boston, Ceridwen, 50-1 Woodlands Genhire

2.05 SANDILANDS HOLIDAYS MAIDEN HURDLE (CLASS F) £2,500 2m 3f 110yds

1	3F	ANOTHER PICEA (47) A J Lockwood 4 11 5	Miss A Deniel
2	004	AUSSIE BOB (34) Mrs S Smith 5 11 5	G F Ryan (5)
3	40	CASUAL CALL (13) T Easterby 5 11 5	S Ryan (5)
4	11-	COLOUR CODE (F79) Mrs A Swinbank 5 11 5	J Supple
5	05022/	COTTAGE CRAFT (777) W Bethell 6 11 5	2nd pref
6	004-3	DONNYBROOK (17) R Woodhouse 4 11 5	W Dwan
7	F645-2	FERRERS (10) Mrs P Sly 6 11 5	W Marston
8		JUICE PLUS (F823) B Ellison 6 11 5	D Parker
9	00-	NORMANDY DUKE (NZ) (381) C Mann 5 11 5	J Magee (3)
10	0064/	PRIMITIVE MAN (626) B Temple 7 11 5	O Pears
11	25-0	SIBERIAN HENRY (20) B Smart 4 11 5	J Leech
12	4	TARA-BROGAN (27) I Williams 4 11 5	P Henley (3)
13	60-	MISS MOUSE (226) K Comerford 5 11 0	M Ranger

– 13 declared –

BETTING: 6-5 Colour Code, 5-1 Ferrers, 11-2 Siberian Henry, 7-1 Tara-Brogan, 8-1 Donnybrook, 12-1 Casual Call, 16-1 Another Picea, 20-1 others

2.35 ROSELAND KILVINGTON HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS D) £6,500 2m 3f 110yds

1	23-441	DANA POINT (13) (D) Mrs S Smith 5 11 12	G F Ryan (5)
2	0P-F63	MARCHANT MING (11) M Hammond 5 11 7	— B
3	512-3P	LETS BE FRANK (31) (D) N Chance 6 11 1	D Finnegan (7)
4	U03/42	NELTEGRITY (18) Mrs P Sly 8 10 0	W Marston
5	1F231/	DOCS DILEMMA (770) D Shaw 8 10 0	O Pears
6	212143	DOWN THE YARD (43) (C) M Chapman 4 10 0	W Worthington

– 6 declared –

Min. 10st. Neltegrity 9st 9lb, Docs Dilemma 9st 8lb, Down The Yard 9st 5lb.

BETTING: 2-1 Dana Point, 3-1 Marchant Ming, Lets Be Frank, 9-2 Neltegrity, 7-1 Down The Yard, 12-1 Docs Dilemma.

3.05 DUCKWORTH FREELANDER NOVICE CHASE (CLASS D) £5,200 2m 1f 110yds

1	524P-4	CHEEKA (23) C Smith 8 10 12	M Ranger
2	246450	JOHN TUFTY (15) J Pearce 6 10 12	J Ryan
3	330405	NON VINTAGE (14) (CD) M Chapman 6 10 12	W Worthington
4	6-2222	TEJANO GOLD (15) (D) P Bradley 7 10 12	W Marston

– 4 declared –

BETTING: 4-5 Tejano Gold, 5-2 Non Vintage, 9-2 Cheeka, 10-1 John Tufty

3.35 RON LANE NOVICE CLAIMING HURDLE (CLASS G) £2,200 2m 1f 110yds

1	P-6523	CARROLLS ROCK (9) C Mann 6 11 6	J Magee (3)
2	4	SHARK (43) K Morgan 4 11 3	Mr K R O'Ryan (7)
3	4	SHARP EMBRACE (45) K Comerford 4 11 3	S Ryan (5)
4	364-3	SALLY'S TWINS (41) N Chance 4 11 1	D Finnegan (7)
5	0PP-5	AWESOME VENTURE (F8) M Chapman 7 11 0	W Worthington
6	3	GUY'S GAMBLE (16) J Wharton 4 10 11	W Marston
7	40	LORD HASTIE (USA) (13) N Tinkler 9 10 11	O Pears
8	4	FORGET PARIS (14) B Rothwell 4 10 9	A Currie (7)
9	5	LADY SILK (22) Miss J Craze 6 10 9	S Webster
10	-53241	BAHER (USA) (10) S Clark 8 10 8	Miss R Clark (5)
11	00	KATATONIC (17) Mrs L Jewell 4 10 5	R Studholme (7)
12	180	STEAM ON (17) (D) Mrs L Jewell 6 10 5	P Henley (3)
13	5	JILLY BEVELED (18) B Ellison 5 10 0	D Parker
14	PPU-PP	REGAL JEST (49) B Murray 7 10 0	W Dwan

– 14 declared –

BETTING: 9-4 Sally's Twins, 3-1 Shark, 6-1 Carrolls Rock, Baher, 8-1 Lord Hastie, 12-1 Guy's Gamble, Lady Silk, Steam On, 20-1 others

HEREFORD

HYPERION

12.35 The Village Way 1.05 Bold Romeo 1.35 St Mellion Leisure 2.05 Wayfarers Way 2.35 The Brewer 3.05 Spearhead Again 3.35 Distant Storm

GOING: Good to Soft (Soft in places).

● Right-hand course with 300yd run-in.

● Course is N of city on A49. ADMISSION: Club £13; Tattersalls £10; course enclosure £5. CAR PARK: Free.

● LEADING TRAINERS: M Pipe 34-99 (34.3%), N Twiston-Davies 26-96 (27.1%), N Henderson 14-30 (46.7%), P Hobbs 14-62 (22.6%).

● LEADING JOCKEYS: J R Kavanagh 10-57 (17.5%), C Maude 9-48 (18.8%), N Williamson 8-54 (14.8%), S Wynne 5-49 (10.2%).

● FAVOURITES: 205-520 (39.4%).

BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Storm Point (2.35)(visored), Over The Wrekin (3.05).

12.35 GOOSE NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) (DIV I) £3,000 added 2m 3f 110yds

1	153	THE FULL MONTY (28) C Brooks 5 11 5	S McNeill
2	422-35	BUILDER BOY (8) S Brookshaw 7 10 12	S Wynne
3	0P/	CRADLERS (1406) E L James 9 10 12	M Berry (7)
4	00-60	GALLANT TAFFY (23) Mrs L Williamson 5 10 12	—
5	0	GO BRITANNIA (17) F Jordan 4 10 12	D Byrne
6	000-P	JUSTJIM (21) T Keddy 5 10 12	—
7	P4	LIATHACH (13) D Thom 6 10 12	J Culloty
8	41-5	MAZILEO (32) I Williams 4 10 12	E Husband (3)
9	0	NUNS TOY BOY (18) J M Bradley 5 10 12	X Aizpuru (5)
10	0056/	PERFIK LARK (575) R Brotherton 7 10 12	G Hogan (3)
11	06-0	SARAS DELIGHT (38) D Nicholson 5 10 12	Mr O McPhail (7)
12	50-346	SHORE PARTY (27) N Twiston-Davies 5 10 12	T Jenks
13	00-	WESTERN SUN (237) J R Hughes 7 10 12	L Cummins (5)
14	000-0	OUTRAGEOUS AFFAIR (50) A James 5 10 7	Gary Lyons
15	0-	OYSTER DELIGHT (272) D Carey 6 10 7	Miss E J Jones (7)
16	0-	RISKY ROSE (F160) Graeme Roe 5 10 7	D J Moffatt

– 16 declared –

BETTING: 5-2 Shore Party, 3-1 Saras Delight, 7-2 The Full Monty, 5-1 Builder Boy, 8-1 Go Britannia, 12-1 Mazileo, 25-1 others

1.05 GOOSE NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) (DIV II) £3,000 added 2m 3f 110yds

1		BALIOS (F522) W G M Turner 4 10 12	J Culloty
2	P5	DRAMA KING (6) B Llewellyn 5 10 12	Mr J L Llewellyn
3		FIGHTING TIMES (F50) C Smith 5 10 12	V Slattery
4	403	FITZMAURICE (20) C Brooks 5 10 12	S McNeill
5	0500	HENRY TUDOR (104) A James 5 10 12	Gary Lyons
6	P-5	JOLTO (18) W Jenks 8 10 12	T Jenks
7	00	LATCHFORD (21) I Williams 5 10 12	E Husband (3)
8	0	MR LAMBRINI (9) Mrs L Williamson 5 10 12	—
9	50	NIGELLO (20) R Alner 5 10 12	Mr J D Moore (7)
10	U060	SEVERN REEF (22) J M Bradley 6 10 12	Guy Lewis (3)
11		SHARP PROGRESS (F35) A P Jones 4 10 12	X Aizpuru (5)
12	0-0	SILVER GULL (30) H Howe 6 10 12	G Shenkin (7)
13	2142-	THE VILLAGE WAY (218) (BF) Miss V Williams 6 10 12	S Wynne
14		BUDS OF MAY N Hawke 7 10 7	J R Kavanagh
15	PR/00-	FOREST ROSE (261) M Sheppard 7 10 7	G Hogan (3)
16	145-0	TARA GALE (25) J Neville 5 10 7	L Cummins (5)

– 16 declared –

BETTING: 7-4 Fitzmaurice, 15-8 The Village Way, 6-1 Tara Gale, 16-1 Fighting Times, Sharp Progress, 20-1 Latchford, 25-1 others

1.35 MINCE PIE SELLING HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS G) £2,400 added 3m 2f

1	4234-6	STAR PERFORMER (137) (BF) F Jordan 6 12 0	R Hodges (7)
2	21P2PP	ST MELLION LEISURE (15) N Hawke 5 11 0	L Cummins (5)
3	336120	WEATHER WISE (4) (BF) W G M Turner 5 10 11	J R Kavanagh
4	-2035P	VIA DEL QUATRO (17) J Mullins 5 10 0	J Culloty
5	443534	JUST FOR A REASON (32) R Juckes 5 10 0	Mr O McPhail (7)
6	04F0/0	PORTOLANO (FR) (11) B Baugh 6 10 0	Gary Lyons
7	0005P-	GREEN KING (226) A P Jones 5 10 0	S McNeill B
8	0P0P-0	THE CHEESE BARON (11) S Mellor 6 10 0	C Webb (5)

– 8 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Just For A Reason 9st 9lb, Portolano 9st 8lb, Green King 9st 7lb, The Cheese Baron 9st 4lb.

BETTING: 3-1 Via Del Quatro, 7-2 Just For A Reason, 4-1 Weather Wise, 9-2 Star Performer, 6-1 St Mellion Leisure, 12-1 Green King, 14-1 others

2.05 TOTE NOVICE HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS D) £5,000 added 2m 3f

1	112-51	WAYFARERS WAY (15) (C) N Henderson 6 11 10	J R Kavanagh
2	3124/P	RAPHAEL BODINE (65) Miss V Williams 8 11 10	S McNeill
3	0332U-	SUPER RITCHART (304) B Palling 9 11 4	D J Moffatt
4	U2F3-0	PURBECK CAVALIER (29) R Alner 8 10 11	Mr J D Moore (7)
5	P6-6F4	BOLD ACRE (10) (C) J M Bradley 7 10 11	X Aizpuru (5) B
6	20-241	WINNOW (15) (D) Miss H Knight 7 10 4	J Culloty
7	400P-0	THE CROOKED OAK (22) N Twiston-Davies 5 10 1	T Jenks
8	00-452	SENSE OF VALUE (21) J Smith 8 10 0	Mr O McPhail (7)
9	532431	CAN'T SAY (5) J M Bradley 5 10 0 (7ex)	S Wynne
10	430-40	DESERT CALM (17) D McCain 8 10 0	V Slattery B

– 10 declared –

Minimum: 10st. True weights: Can't Say 9st 6lb, Desert Calm 9st 0lb.

BETTING: 7-4 Wayfarers Way, 5-1 Winnow, Can't Say, 8-1 Bold Acre, 10-1 Purbeck Cavalier, Sense Of Value, 12-1 Raphael Bodine, 14-1 others

2.35 HUGHES CATERERS HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS F) £4,000 2m 3f 110yds

1	60560-	LITTLE GUNNER (314) M Sheppard 7 11 12	Mr J M Pritchard
2	41/	VALIANT (608) T Forster 6 11 9	S Wynne
3	02121-	SNOWSHILL SHAKER (231) N Twiston-Davies 8 11 8	T Jenks
4	3-S111	THE BREWER (52) (CD) J Tuck 5 11 1	2nd Preference
5	21452	LORD NITROGEN (10) (D BF) B Llewellyn 7 11 0	Mr J L Llewellyn
6	-23314	HIGH LOW (10) I Jones 9 10 10	Miss E J Jones (7)
7	111-22	CARACOL (10) (CD) (BF) J Neville 8 10 7	J R Kavanagh
8	-00141	SECRET GIFT (16) Mrs J Pitman 4 10 6	G Hogan (3) B
9	2P1-05	STORM TIGER (10) S Mellor 6 10 1	C Webb (5)
10	2060-6	LIME STREET BLUES (9) T Keddy 6 10 0	2nd pref
11	0006P-	WHITEBONNET (224) C Jackson 7 10 0	Miss S Jackson B
12	P-555P	MILLING BROOK (9) (D) J M Bradley 5 10 0	X Aizpuru (5)
13	P3013-	ONE MORE DIME (216) J R Hughes 7 10 0	L Cummins (5)
14	000P/P	STORM POINT (20) H Howe 9 10 0	G Shenkin (7) V

– 14 declared –

Minimum: 10st. True weights: Lime Street Blues 9st 11lb, Whitebonnet 9st 7lb, Milling Brook 9st 6lb, One More Dime 9st 3lb, Storm Point 8st 11lb

BETTING: 5-2 Secret Gift, 9-2 Snowshill Shaker, 11-2 Storm Tiger, 6-1 Lord Nitrogen, 13-2 Caracol, 7-1 High Low, 10-1 Valiant, 14-1 others

3.05 PLUM PUDDING NOVICE CHASE (CLASS E) £4,500 added 3m 1f 110yds

1	5841-0	BALLYDOUGAN (8) (D) R Mathew 9 11 5	J Culloty V
2	0F6-13	SPEARHEAD AGAIN (55) (BF) Miss V Williams 8 11 5	S Kelly (7)
3	/0U1-P	STRAY HARMONY (11) R Smith 7 11 0	G Hogan (3)
4	/112-4	BAGALINO (22) T Forster 7 10 12	S Wynne
5	/351-	FIRST HARVEST (272) C Bennett 10 10 12	Mr P Hanly
6	3630-3	FREDDIE MUCK (104) (BF) N Twiston-Davies 7 10 12	T Jenks
7	00/50-	FROWN (258) P Bowen 7 10 12	J R Kavanagh
8	F-PPP5	JEMARO (16) W Jenks 6 10 12	Gary Lyons
9	U84-8P	ORPHAN SPA (8) G McCourt 6 10 12	D J Moffatt
10	P/PP-P	OVER THE WREKIN (21) J R Hughes 10 10 12	L Cummins (5) B
11	53-6P5	COUNTRY STORE (20) A P Jones 8 10 7	S McNeill
12	/P4-F4	HOPPERDANTE (32) T George 7 10 7	Mr O McPhail (7)

– 12 declared –

BETTING: 7-4 Freddie Muck, 7-2 Spearhead Again, 6-1 Bagalino, 8-1 Hopperdante, 10-1 Ballydougan, 12-1 First Harvest, Country Store, 16-1 others

3.35 BLANDFORD BETTING NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,500 2m 1f

1	222305	BAD BERTRICH (43) (BF) Graeme Roe 6 11 10	D J Moffatt
2	P1122	DISTANT STORM (9) (D) B Llewellyn 4 11 8	Mr J L Llewellyn B
3	63-0	RUMPELSTILTSKIN (43) H Howe 5 11 7	G Shenkin (7)
4	224451	MARGI BOO (8) M Sheppard 4 10 13 (7ex)	Mr O McPhail (7)
5	-0263P	DON'T TELL TOM (23) H Haynes 7 10 12	2nd pref B
6	06-453	BLAZE OF SONG (20) D Wintle 5 10 12	Gary Lyons
7	/0B60-	POT BLACKBIRD (270) R Brotherton 6 10 8	J Culloty
8	PPC3/	COME ON RISK ME (680) D McCain 6 10 5	T Jenks
9	3004-6	DOVETTO (18) A E Price 8 10 3	S Wynne
10	5F0P-1	STUDIO THIRTY (10) (C) R Dickin 5 10 3	X Aizpuru (5)
11	/GPPF-	MR GOONHILLY (309) F Jordan 7 10 0	B Clarke (7)
12	4R06-6	LADY ROSEBURY (37) R J Price 7 10 0	E Husband (3)

– 12 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weight: Lady Rosebury 9st 0lb.

BETTING: 3-1 Distant Storm, 7-2 Blaze Of Song, Studio Thirty, 5-1 Margi Boo, 7-1 Dovetto, 10-1 Bad Bertrich, 20-1 Rumpelstiltskin, 25-1 others

WOLVERHAMPTON

HYPERION

1.15 Napier Star 1.40 Fayik 2.15 Frolicking 2.45 Elite Hope 3.15 Democrat 3.50 Rex Mundi 4.20 Genuine John 4.50 Chadleigh Lane

GOING: Standard. STALLS: Inside

DRAW ADVANTAGE: High from 6f to 1m 4f.

● Fibresand, left-hand, oval course.

● Course is N of town on A449. Wolverhampton station 1m. ADMISSION: Club £15; Tattersalls £6 (OAP members of Diamond Club £4); Viewing Restaurant £25.90 including entrance and meal. CAR PARK: free.

● *LEADING TRAINERS: R Hollinshead — 60 winners from 586 runners gives a success ratio of 10.2%,* M Johnston 53 from 236 (22.5%); J Berry 43 from 301 (14.3%); P Evans 31 from 334 (9.6%).

● LEADING JOCKEYS: J Quinn 25 wins from 394 rides gives a success ratio of 6.3%. F Lynch 24 from 242 (9.9%). A Clark 23 from 203 (11.3%); D Wright 23 from 252 (9.1%).

● FAVOURITES: 403 wins in 1,246 races (32.3%)

BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Head Gardener (visored), Red Phantom (3.50); Muara Bay (4.20), Orange Place (visored) (4.50).

1.15 CHRIS MASSEY'S BIRTHDAY HANDICAP (CLASS E) (DIV I) £4,025 6f

1	100003	TAKHLID (13) (CD) D Chapman 6 10 0	A Culhane 5
2	100000	DOUBLE-O (13) (CD) W Jarvis 3 9 13	J Quinn 2
3	001603	RAMSEY HOPE (7) (C D) C Fairhurst 4 9 11	P Roberts (3) 3 V
4	524304	MIKE'S DOUBLE (24) (CD) Gay Kelleway 3 9 7	A Whelan (3) 1 B
5	360630	NAPIER STAR (8) (C) (D) Mrs N Macauley 4 9 7	D Biggs 4 V
6	055013	VILLAGE NATIVE (18) (C) (D) K C-Brown 4 9 2	A Clark 8 B
7	000002	U-NO-HARRY (35) (D) R Hollinshead 4 8 8	F Lynch 6
8	200044	RENNYHOLME (18) (C) A Mulholland 6 7 11	D Wright 7

– 8 declared –

BETTING: 3-1 Village Native, 4-1 Ramsey Hope, 11-2 Takhlid, U-No-Harry, Rennyholme, 13-2 Mike's Double, 8-1 Napier Star, 14-1 Double-O

1.40 BREAD SAUCE MAIDEN STAKES (CLASS D) £4,900 added 3YO 1m 100yds

1	05-600	BLOOD ORANGE (31) G Margarson 9 0	A Clark 2
2	2	BONGO (214) C Thornton 9 0	M Tebbutt 1
3	000323	FAYIK (16) A Newcombe 9 0	J Quinn 6
4	68-3	OTHER CLUB (31) J Toller 9 0	T Williams 4
5	602	AHLIYAT (54) J Hills 8 9	W Ryan 3
6	030460	PATINA (20) R Hollinshead 8 9	F Lynch 5

– 6 declared –

BETTING: 7-4 Ahliyat, 3-1 Fayik, 7-2 Other Club, 4-1 Bongo, 16-1 Patina, 20-1 Blood Orange

2.15 CHRISTMAS PUDDING CLAIMING STAKES (CLASS F) £3,300 2YO 6f

1	605000	COMEOUTOFTHEFOG (111) D ffrench Davis 8 13	S Drowne 5
2		TREACLE JONES N Tinkler 8 13	W Ryan 3
3	404050	FROLICKING (35) N Littmoden 8 6	S Whitworth 8
4	005000	NIGHT AUCTION (4) B Palling 8 4	T Williams 9
5	00200	STRAVSEA (142) B Baugh 8 4	R Lappin 7
6	000000	MAGGICE (20) R Hollinshead 8 2	Martin Dwyer 6
7	000000	TOUCHANOVA (4) G Margarson 8 0	J Quinn 2
8	00	JUST FOR TINA (4) W G M Turner 7 12	A McCarthy (7) 4
9	00	POLLYDUU (18) N Littmoden 7 12	D Wright 1

– 9 declared –

BETTING: 15-8 Frolicking, 9-2 Night Auction, 13-2 Treacle Jones, Stravsea, Just For Tina, 8-1 Touchanova, 10-1 Pollyduu, 16-1 others

2.45 CHRIS MASSEY'S BIRTHDAY HANDICAP (CLASS E) (DIV II) £4,025 6f

1	340001	ELITE HOPE (35) (CD) N Tinkler 5 10 0	W Ryan 1
2	61400	ITALIAN SYMPHONY (13) (CD) P Evans 3 9 11	A McCarthy (7) 4 V
3	000265	EASTERN PROPHETS (13) (D) (BF) G Lewis 4 9 9	A Clark 8
4	6-43P0	MULLAGH HILL LAD (13) (C) N Littmoden 4 9 7	S Whitworth 3
5	15-000	REDOUBTABLE (8) (D) D Chapman 6 9 4	A Culhane 2
6	660026	CORNICHE QUEST (27) (D) M Channon 4 8 12	A Eddery (7) 6
7	000020	DEERLY (8) (D) (BF) R Dickin 4 8 3	P Mundy (7) 5
8	100335	RIVER ENSIGN (22) (D) W M Brisbourne 4 7 10	J Quinn 7

– 8 declared –

Minimum weight 7st 10lb. True handicap weight: River Ensign 7st 9lb.

BETTING: 3-1 Eastern Prophets, 5-1 Elite Hope, 11-2 Italian Symphony, 7-1 Redoubtable, Corniche Quest, 8-1 River Ensign, 10-1 others

3.15 HAGUE FASTENERS HANDICAP (CLASS C) £7,325 added 1m 100yds

1	006141	LIONIZE (22) (D) Mrs J Cecil 4 9 11	W Ryan 4 B
2	36111	DEMOCRAT (13) (C) (D) Sir M Prescott 3 9 3	G Duffield 7
3	0-0005	QUEEN'S PAGEANT (27) J Spearing 3 9 2	S Drowne 8
4	420003	SILK ST JOHN (18) (D) M Ryan 3 8 6	A Clark 9
5	230401	SUALTACH (59) (C) (D) R Hollinshead 4 8 4	F Lynch 6
6	052041	BENTICO (8) (CD) Mrs N Macauley 8 8 4 (6ex)	D Biggs 2 V
7	001200	CEE-N-K (14) (D) M Johnston 3 8 3	I Grantham (7) 5 B
8	01040	THREE ARCH BRIDGE (14) (D) M Johnston 5 8 2	N Pollard (7) 3 B
9	023035	ENCHANTING EVE (16) (C) (D) C Allen 3 7 13	Martin Dwyer 1

– 9 declared –

BETTING: 15-8 Democrat, 9-2 Lionize, 5-1 Silk St John, 13-2 Sualtach, 8-1 Queen's Pageant, Bentico, 10-1 Cee-N-K, 12-1 others

3.50 TURKEY SELLING STAKES (CLASS G) £2,875 added 1m 4f

1	104003	REX MUNDI (20) (CD) P Evans 5 9 12	A McCarthy (7) 6 V
2	-00100	RED PHANTOM (J37) (C) (D) S Mellor 5 9 8	M Wigham 1 B
3	325-02	PEARL ANNIVERSARY (J9) (CD) Miss S Wilton 4 9 4	M Martin Dwyer 2
4	530000	HEAD GARDENER (18) N Littmoden 3 9 3	S Whitworth 5 V
5	245403	SKELTON SOVEREIGN (13) (CD) R Hollinshead 3 9 3	D Hayden (7) 10
6	5-004	SIBOR STAR (239) D Burchell 5 9 13	A Clark 8
7	466000	SWISS COAST (J29) R Juckes 3 8 13	A Culhane 4 V
8	40000	BLAZER'S BABY (J39) Mrs N Macauley 3 8 12	S Drowne 9
9	000004	SIDNEY THE KIDNEY (18) M Ryan 3 8 8	— 3
10	340606	TABASCO JAZZ (20) B Meehan 3 8 8	M Tebbutt 7

– 10 declared –

BETTING: 3-1 Rex Mundi, 7-2 Skelton Sovereign, 5-1 Pearl Anniversary, 7-1 Head Gardener, Tabasco Jazz, 8-1 Red Phantom, 10-1 others

4.20 PARSONS' NOSE HANDICAP (CLASS F) (DIV I) £3,300 added 1m 1f 79yds

1	540000	XENOPHON OF CUNAXA (J10) B Llewellyn 4 9 12	J Wilkinson (7) 8
2	114004	SOLDIER COVE (J10) (CD) D Burchell 7 9 9	S Copp (5) 1
3	000065	ETHBAAT (28) (C) M Heaton-Ellis 6 9 6	A Clark 11
4	001604	GABLESEA (8) (C) B Baugh 3 9 4	A Culhane 3
5	230430	FAILED TO HIT (13) N Littmoden 4 9 2	S Whitworth 6 V
6	001410	COLINS CHOICE (67) (C) J Spearing 3 9 1	P Bradley (7) 5
7	066424	HEATHYARDS LADY (27) (C BF) R Hollinshead 6 9 1	F Lynch 10
8	000005	GENUINE JOHN (8) J Parkes 4 8 12	M Tebbutt 4
9	233125	MUARA BAY (65) (BF) G Lewis 3 8 12	A Clark 7 D
10	140502	QUEENS STROLLER (27) (CD) R Pocock 6 8 10	J Bramhill 9
11	240504	SHUTTLECOCK (18) (C) D Chapman 6 8 1	J Quinn 2

– 11 declared –

BETTING: 4-1 Muara Bay, 9-2 Queens Stroller, 11-2 Gablesea, 13-2 Heathyards Lady, 7-1 Soldier Cove, Colins Choice, 8-1 Failed To Hit, 12-1 others

4.50 PARSONS' NOSE HANDICAP (CLASS F) (DIV II) £3,300 added 1m 1f 79yds

1	000501	MAZEED (20) (CD) P Evans 4 9 11	A McCarthy (7) 3 V
2	203004	ORANGE PLACE (35) B Llewellyn 6 9 10	J Wilkinson (7) 9 V
3	023224	GUESSTIMATION (7) (D) J Pearce 8 9 4	M Wigham 1
4	006420	MERCURY (13) B Baugh 4 9 2	A Culhane 4
5	0-4000	SHE'S A CRACKER (8) Mrs N Macauley 3 9 2	S Drowne 2
6	640304	CHADLEIGH LANE (20) (C) A Mulholland 5 9 1	D Wright 7 V
7	0-0061	GIRL OF MY DREAMS (27) (C) M Heaton-Ellis 4 8 11	T Williams 6
8	60-606	NORTH ARDAR (298) N Littmoden 7 8 6	S Whitworth 8
9	506065	PRINCIPAL BOY (32) (D) J Glover 4 8 5	S D Williams 5
10	0-0000	GREAT BEAR (65) D Chapman 5 7 10	J Quinn 10

– 10 declared –

Minimum weight 7st 10lb. True handicap weight: Great Bear 7st 8lb.

BETTING: 5-2 Mazeed, 3-1 Girl Of My Dreams, 9-2 Guesstimation, 6-1 Chadleigh Lane, 8-1 Principal Boy, 10-1 Orange Place, 16-1 others

HUNTINGDON

HYPERION

12.30 The Toiseach 1.00 Garethson 1.30 Ernest William 2.00 High Learie 2.30 Edmond 3.00 Fenwick's Brother 3.30 Sunuvugun

GOING: Good to soft. ● Right-hand, level course. Run-in 200yds.

● Course is at junction of A1 and A604. ADMISSION: Members £12; Paddock £8; Course £4. CAR PARK: Picnic area £1, rest free.

● LEADING TRAINERS: K Bailey 23-69 (33.3%), J Gifford 16-72 (22.2%), G Hubbard 13-61 (21.3%), N Henderson 11-38 (28.9%).

● LEADING JOCKEYS: N Williamson 15-70 (21.4%), M Brennan 7-51 (13.7%), J A McCarthy 6-38 (15.8%), R Thornton 5-15 (33.3%).

● FAVOURITES: 211 wins in 489 races (43.1%).

BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Physical Fun (2.30).

12.30 CHRISTMAS NOVICE CHASE (CLASS E) (DIV I) £4,075 added 2m 4f 110yds

1	212-11	THE TOISEACH (17) (CD) J Fanshawe 6 11 5	R Thornton
2	3631-P	GEMMA'S WAGER (38) (D) M Campion 7 11 0	W McFarland
3	2/623-	DOMINOS RING (322) Mrs H Walton 8 10 12	Mr A Walton
4	6-3F1	HARLEQUIN CHORUS (15) Mrs J Pitman 7 10 12	D Leahy
5	0240/	HE FLIES BY NIGHT (1018) Miss H Knight 6 10 12	J F Titley
6	3PP-05	INCH CHAMPION (22) A Carroll 5 10 12	M Richards
7	PPP-3P	MINOR KEY (16) J Jenkins 7 10 12	B Clifford
8	0003/2	MUSIC THERAPY (30) T Forster 7 10 12	J A McCarthy
9	/06-05	RISING MAN (31) J Gifford 6 10 12	L Aspell (3)
10	0512-2	STRAIGHT ON (15) Mrs D Haine 6 10 12	Michael Brennan (3)

– 10 declared –

BETTING: 9-4 Harlequin Chorus, 5-2 The Toiseach, 11-2 Straight On, 8-1 Music Therapy, 10-1 Gemma's Wager, 14-1 Dominos Ring, He Flies By Night, Inch Champion, Minor Key, Rising Man

1.00 CHRISTMAS NOVICE CHASE (CLASS E) (DIV II) £4,075 added 2m 4f 110yds

1	423-16	MARIUS (29) J Gifford 7 11 5	L Aspell (3)
2	PP6P-0	BALLYMICHAEL (35) G Balding 5 10 12	B Clifford
3	F3433-	BRIDGE END (265) K F Clutterbuck 6 10 12	I Lawrence
4	04-222	EIRESPRAY (23) (BF) Mrs S Smith 6 10 12	R Wilkinson (5)
5	50	EXPANSIVE RUNNER (USA) (27) A H Harvey 5 10 12	J A McCarthy
6	/3233-	GARETHSON (264) (BF) Miss H Knight 6 10 12	J F Titley
7	3-123	OCCOLD (25) (BF) G Hubbard 6 10 12	Michael Brennan (3)
8	0331-3	SELATAN (28) (D) D Gandolfo 5 10 12	M Richards
9	1-	SHADRACH (272) (D) Mrs H Mobley 6 10 12	W McFarland
10	144230	SUMMER VILLA (48) K Wingrove 5 10 7	R Massey (3) B

– 10 declared –

BETTING: 9-2 Marius, Garethson, Occold, Shadrach, 6-1 Eirespray, Selatan, 10-1 Ballymichael, Bridge End, 16-1 others

1.30 CHRISTMAS HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS F) £2,575 added 2m 5f 110yds

1	61-	RING FOR ROSIE (244) T Forster 6 11 10	J F Titley
2	3-311	THE BREWER (52) J Tuck 5 11 9	R Bellamy
3	0344-R	NORTHERN STAR (15) (CD) Miss J Wormall 6 11 5	R Thornton
4	632/62	MISS BRECKNELL (11) Mrs J Pitman 8 11 1	D Leahy
5	23P/P4	BARELY BLACK (17) N Babbage 9 11 0	M Keighley (7)
6	556-FP	IODER WAN (16) Mrs C Hicks 5 10 13	L Aspell (3)
7	F450-1	ERNEST WILLIAM (11) G Hubbard 5 10 10 (7ex)	Michael Brennan (3)
8	3344-0	MASTER DANCER (22) (D) Miss C Dyson 10 10 9	Miss C Dyson
9	-0263P	DON'T TELL TOM (23) H Haynes 7 10 8	J A McCarthy B
10	3540-0	WANSTEAD (11) J Jenkins 5 10 6	B Clifford V
11	2060-6	LIME STREET BLUES (9) T Keddy 6 10 5	J Goldstein (7)
12	33P-4R	CAMBO (USA) (8) (D) M Banks 11 10 4	I Lawrence
13	134025	SLIGHTLY SPECIAL (41) D Thom 5 10 3	R Massey (3)
14	3455-	EMALLEN (477) (C) Mrs L Jewell 9 10 0	W McFarland V

– 14 declared –

Minimum weight 10st. True handicap weight: Emallen 9st 5lb.

BETTING: 11-4 The Brewer, 6-1 Ring For Rosie, Ernest William, 7-1 Cambo, 8-1 Miss Brecknell, Don't Tell Tom, Lime Street Blues, Slightly Special, 14-1 others

2.00 BEDFORD LODGE HOTEL HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS E) £4,075 added 3m

1	42-212	GEMS LAD (163) (D) (BF) Mrs S Smith 10 11 10	M Richards
2	PP1 34	OCEAN LEADER (31) (C) (D) Mrs D Haine 10 11 10	J F Titley
3	4P 21-	SOME DAY SOON (434) M Bradstock 12 11 8	R Thornton
4	2-F414	HIGH LEARIE (15) (CD) A H Harvey 7 11 8	J A McCarthy
5	4065P-	STAGE PLAYER (217) (D) Miss C Caroe 11 10 11	I Lawrence
6	44 U53	PAVLOVA (10) R Rowe 7 10 11	A Garrity (7)
7	01031/	YOUNG BALDRIC (1093) Mrs J Pitman 10 10 9	D Leahy
8	124-34	KARENASTINO (9) Mrs S Smith 6 10 2	R Wilkinson (5)
9	331-60	WOT NO GIN (32) A J Wilson 8 10 0	Michael Brennan (3)
10	2-22P3	BLACK STATEMENT (23) J Gifford 7 10 0	L Aspell (3)
11	3-0345	RYTON RUN (37) (C) (D) Mrs S Odell 12 10 0	B Clifford

– 11 declared –

Minimum weight 10st. True weights: Wot No Gin 9st 13lb, Black Statement 9st 5lb, Ryton Run 9st 3lb.

BETTING: 7-2 Gems Lad, 4-1 Ocean Leader, 5-1 High Learie, 13-2 Some Day Soon, Black Statement, 8-1 Karenastino, 10-1 Stage Player, Pavlova, 14-1 others

2.30 FESTIVE SPIRIT NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) £2,925 added 3m 2f

1	60-1	POLO RIDGE (64) O Sherwood 5 11 5	J A McCarthy
2	5	BALLYHARRY (25) P Winkworth 7 10 12	L Aspell (3)
3	25-220	BANNY HILL LAD (20) C Morlock 7 10 12	J F Titley B
4	6-3	CARAS ROSE (48) Mrs J Pitman 5 10 12	D Leahy
5	0F-0P	CONQUER THE KILT (21) J Mullins 6 10 12	S Curran
6	00-	COTTESMORE (346) Mrs A E Johnson 6 10 12	I Lawrence
7	2-2F	EDMOND (FR) (30) (BF) T Forster 5 10 12	R Thornton
8	63P6U	JAVELIN COOL (6) G Hubbard 6 10 12	R Elkins (7)
9	2264P-	MONTECOT (FR) (293) S Mellor 6 10 12	Mr P Scott
10	22-4PF	PHYSICAL FUN (21) A Blackmore 6 10 12	W McFarland B
11	P00	PURE AIR (6) Mrs C Hicks 5 10 12	R Bellamy
12	2	QUITE LIVELY (36) K Bailey 5 10 12	W Walsh (7)
13	66-4	WISLEY WARRIOR (69) N Twiston-Davies 6 10 12	J Goldstein (7)
14	264-50	ARDENBAR (31) J W Payne 5 10 7	Michael Brennan (3)
15	U351	SPERRIN VIEW (206) Mrs H Mobley 11 10 7	M Richards

– 15 declared –

BETTING: 2-1 Edmond, 9-2 Polo Ridge, 11-2 Quite Lively, 13-2 Montecot, 8-1 Banny Hill Lad, Caras Rose, Wisley Warrior, 20-1 others

3.00 BOXING DAY HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS F) £3,475 added 2m 110yds

1	1U11-0	PERSIAN ELITE (67) (BF) C Egerton 6 12 0	J A McCarthy
2	P21311	AUBURN BOY (17) (CD) I Williams 10 11 2	R Thornton
3	20F-	SLEAZEY (212) (D) J G O'Neill 6 11 2	S Curran
4	152-0F	ABSOLUTE LIMIT (15) J Gifford 5 10 9	L Aspell (3)
5	225-P	NAHLA (31) (D) R Phillips 7 10 5	D Leahy
6	P-0250	DAYS OF THUNDER (37) (D) Mrs S Odell 9 10 2	B Clifford
7	F3P432	FENWICK'S BROTHER (8) (D) Mrs S Smith 7 10 1	R Wilkinson (5)
8	334-6-	ALCOVE (462) G Johnson Houghton 6 10 0	Michael Brennan (3)

– 8 declared –

Minimum weight 10st. True handicap weight: Alcove 9st 13lb.

BETTING: 7-4 Auburn Boy, 3-1 Fenwick's Brother, 7-2 Persian Elite, 6-1 Sleazey, 12-1 Days Of Thunder, 16-1 Absolute Limit, Nahla, 20-1 Alcove

3.30 MISTLETOE OPEN NH FLAT RACE (CLASS H) £1,500 added 2m 110yds

1		AMERICAN STYLE Mrs I McKie 5 11 4	R Bellamy
2	0-	COLTIBUONO (330) M Bradstock 5 11 4	B Clifford
3		GO-ONMYSON N Babbage 4 11 4	L Aspell (3)
4		HULK (AUS) M Wilkinson 6 11 4	G Bazin (7)
5	20-	IN THE VAN (321) Mrs D Haine 5 11 4	J F Titley
6	0-	JET SPECIALS (307) Mrs J Pitman 4 11 4	D Leahy
7	5-	MELTON MADE (230) G Hubbard 4 11 4	Michael Brennan (3)
8		RATAGAN M Bradstock 5 11 4	I Lawrence
9		RUNNING WATER P Hedger 4 11 4	M Richards
10	0F	SALFORD QUAY (17) Mrs J Pitman 4 11 4	W McFarland
11		SEVEN O SEVEN P Cundell 4 11 4	R Thornton
12		SUNUVUGUN O Sherwood 5 11 4	J A McCarthy
13	5-	ACHILL RAMBLER (223) (BF) D Nicholson 4 10 13	Mr P Cosgrave (7)
14		COLMARANN Mrs S Smith 5 10 13	Mr J Saville (7)
15		JEANANN K Morgan 4 10 13	P Morris (5)
16	6	MADAM MATCH (25) Mrs H Mobley 5 10 13	Mr A Tate (7)
17		MYSTERE K Bailey 4 10 13	Mr Edgar Byrne (7)
18	00	STRONG SPICE (6) Mrs C Hicks 6 10 13	Miss V Roberts
19	0	THE CAPTAIN'S LADY (37) D Nicholson 5 10 13	R Massey (3)

– 19 declared –

BETTING: 3-1 Sunuvugun, 6-1 In The Van, The Captain's Lady, 7-1 Mystere, 8-1 Jet Specials, 10-1 Salford Quay, 14-1 American Style, Go-onmyson, Melton Made, Colmarann, 20-1 others

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KEMPTON

HYPERION

12.40 Zaralaska 2.20 Suny Bay
1.10 Fiddling The Facts 2.55 Lake Kariba
1.45 Serenus 3.25 Friendship

GOING: Good to Soft.
● Right-hand course. Practically flat. Run-in of 200yd.
● Course is on A308 at Sunbury. (Bus link from Richmond Underground station) **ADMISSION:** Club £27, Juniors (16 to 25-year-olds) £14; Grandstand £16; Silver Ring £7. Accompanied children under-16 free. **CAR PARK:** Members £5 (limited and must be pre-booked); remainder, free.
● **LEADING TRAINERS:** D Nicholson — 19 winners from 69 runners gives a success ratio of 27.5%; N Henderson 11 from 72 (15.3%); M Pipe 10 from 50 (20%); J Gifford 9 from 77 (11.7%).
● **LEADING JOCKEYS:** A Maguire 25 wins from 95 rides gives a success ratio of 26.3%; M A Fitzgerald 18 from 103 (17.5%); R Dunwoody 15 from 85 (17.6%); A P McCoy 9 from 65 (13.8%).
● **FAVOURITES:** 117 wins in 288 races (40.6%).
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: None.

12.40 PERTEMPS CATERING NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS B) £10,000 added 2m Penalty Value £6,938

1 12 ZARALASKA (22) (D) (BF) (Lady Harris) D Nicholson 6 11 10 A Maguire
Mauve & yellow check, yellow sleeves
2 BARON FERDINAND (F56) (Lady Rothschild) R Charlton 7 11 5 C Llewellyn
Dark blue, yellow chevron hoop, yellow cap
3 12 BETTER OFFER (22) (D) (BF) (Lady Harrison) Mrs A Perrett 5 11 5 M A Fitzgerald
Light green, dark blue & light green hooped sleeves, striped cap
4 3P FLYING ON (17) (Mrs Dawna Wiseman) J Gifford 5 11 5 O Burrows
Royal blue, white hoops, red sleeves & cap
5 58-65 MONTROE (21) (Miss Meriel Tufnell) R Rowe 5 11 5 D Bridgwater
Yellow, green striped sleeves, yellow cap
6 2F-411 SHAHRUR (USA) (22) (D) (Mrs Elizabeth Kiernan) G L Moore 4 11 5 A P McCoy
Emerald green & grey diamonds, emerald green sleeves
7 10-40F ERINTANTE (18) (D) (Jorg Vasicek) F Doumen (Fr) 4 11 0 Mr T Doumen
Red & blue chevrons, red sleeves & cap
– 7 declared –

BETTING: 4-6 Zaralaska, 11-2 Better Offer, Shahrur, 13-2 Baron Ferdinand, 16-1 Erintante, 20-1 Montroe, 25-1 Flying On
1996: Sanmartino 4 11 5 A Maguire 100-30 (D Nicholson) 8 ran

FORM GUIDE

Classy ex-Flat handicapper ZARALASKA *could hardly have been more impressive when scoring by 11 lengths on his hurdling debut at Ascot and the slow pace was responsible for him being beaten three parts of a length by Wahiba Sands when 5-1 on at Leicester. Wahiba Sands followed up at Ascot and Zaralaska is expected to return to winning form, though it might not be easy with* Better Offer, hat-trick seeker Shahrur and interesting jumping recruit Baron Ferdinand under orders. Better Offer, another former smart handicapper on the level, trotted up on his hurdling bow at Huntingdon last month and was long odds-on next time when finding George Bull a neck too good at Windsor. Baron Ferdinand won five times on the Flat, including a length defeat of Captain Horatius in the Scottish Classic at Ayr in 1995.
Selection: ZARALASKA

1.10 PERTEMPS FELTHAM NOVICE CHASE (GRADE 1) (CLASS A) £35,000 3m Penalty Value £21,310 C4

1/12-2 BENGERS MOOR (21) (D) (J R Townshend) P Nicholls 8 11 7 R Dunwoody
Dark blue & yellow (halved), dark blue sleeves, yellow cap
2F0-12 EULOGY (31) (D) (Nicholas Cooper) R Rowe 7 11 7 D Bridgwater
Maroon, yellow armlets, quartered cap
3 4I-F11 FOREST IVORY (28) (D) (Old Foresters Partnership) D Nicholson 6 11 7 A Maguire
Dark blue & yellow stripes, white sleeves & cap
4 412/12 OTTOWA (13) (D) (BF) (P Barber) P Nicholls 7 11 7 A Thornton
Dark green, white chevron, light green sleeves, dark green & white check cap
5 12-111 PENTLANDS FLYER (44) (Mrs M W Bird) J H Johnson 6 11 7 A P McCoy
Purple & white (halved), purple sleeves, striped cap
6 12-P1F SHEKELS (41) (C) (Uplands Bloodstock) C Brooks 8 11 7 G Bradley
Royal blue, white star, white stars on royal blue sleeves & cap
7 4231-1 FIDDLING THE FACTS (13) (D) (Mrs E Roberts) N Henderson 6 11 2 M A Fitzgerald
Black, red sash, quartered cap
– 7 declared –

BETTING: 7-4 Forest Ivory, 9-2 Fiddling The Facts, 6-1 Bengers Moor, Ottowa, Pentlands Flyer, 7-1 Shekels, 8-1 Eulogy
1996: Djeddah 5 11 7 A Kondrat 9-2 (F Doumen, Fr) 5 ran

FORM GUIDE

FOREST IVORY has taken kindly to chasing and can complete a hat-trick. David Nicholson's runner, who wound up last season with a short-head victory in a three-mile hurdle at Aintree, toppled over two out on his fencing bow in Northern Starlight's race at Chepstow *but has been an impressive winner of both starts since – at Wetherby and Bangor – and* there is better still to come. He represents the stable in preference to Escartefigue. Ottowa overcame a long absence to slam Eulogy a dozen lengths at Worcester last month and the *runner-up is no better off. However, Ottawa was beaten three and a half lengths by Fiddling* The Facts at Lingfield next time and Nick Henderson's six-year-old, who was not only having her first run since the spring but was also making her chasing debut on that occasion, can confirm superiority on 7lb worse terms. Northern challenger Pentlands Flyer jumps well and is undefeated after three chases – at Perth, Carlisle and Kelso. He has had a different rider each time and again has a new partner in Tony McCoy. Howard Johnson's runner has more on his plate this time but will not be far away. Winning point-to-pointer Bengers Moor, a stablemate of Ottawa, made an encouraging debut over regulation fences when beaten a length and three-quarters by Wise King at Sandown. Shekels made all on his chasing debut *over an extended two and a half miles here before falling two out when holding with* every chance in Tullymurry Toff's race at Cheltenham.
Selection: FOREST IVORY

1.45 NETWORK PERSONNEL HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS B) £10,000 2m Penalty Value £6,575 C4

1 4350-0 SILVER GROOM (20) (D) (Silver Darling Partnership) M Channon 7 12 0 A Thornton
White, emerald green triple diamond, diamonds on sleeves, emerald green cap, white diamonds
2 40-P11 TIBETAN (14) (D) (Mrs Wendy Brown) Lady Herries 5 11 13 R Dunwoody
Royal blue, orange chevron, brown & orange chevrons on sleeves, orange & royal blue quartered cap
3 312-2P DOCTOOR (14) (D) (BF) (A Walls/Miss K T Wheatley) M Pipe 7 11 7 A P McCoy
Light green, white sleeves, yellow armlets
4 210F-0 SECRET SPRING (FR) (F22) (CD) (M K George) P Hedger 5 11 6 G Bradley
Light green & brown stripes, light green sleeves & cap
5 F060-2 KINGSFOLD PET (37) (D) (Pertemps Ltd) M Haynes 8 11 1 C Llewellyn
Orange, royal blue sleeves, white cap
6 114/2- BLESS ME SISTER (418) (D) (BF) (A J S Palmer) R Rowe 6 10 13 D Bridgwater
Black, emerald green chevrons, striped sleeves, black cap
7 1F60-1 SERENUS (17) (D) (W V M W & Mrs E S Robins) N Henderson 4 10 12 M A Fitzgerald
Orange, black epaulets, black & orange striped sleeves, black cap, orange star
8 F13214 NOBLE COLOURS (14) (D) (S Griffiths) S Griffiths 4 10 0 D Gallagher
Black, white hoops, black sleeves, emerald green & white quartered cap
– 8 declared –

BETTING: 5-2 Serenus, Tibetan, 5-1 Secret Spring, 7-1 Doctoor, Kingsfold Pet, 12-1 Noble Colours, 14-1 Silver Groom, 20-1 Bless Me Sister
1996: Albemine 7 10 10 T Kent 6-4 fav (Mrs J Cecil) 4 ran

FORM GUIDE

SECRET SPRING comes here after a recent run on the Flat when he started favourite but *missed the break on the Lingfield Equitrack. Peter Hedger's charge finished well beaten at* Cheltenham last month on his first run over timber since falling at Ascot in April. However, Secret Spring did score twice last season – at Windsor and over course and distance – and also ran second twice. He can come good again this time. Secret Spring might have most to fear from Tibetan, who comes here in cracking form after wins at Huntingdon and Cheltenham. Noble Colours, a 12-length fourth at Cheltenham, is held on 6lb better terms, while Doctoor, who went off favourite, was tailed off when pulled up before the last and the blinkers he wore for the first time there are dispensed with here. Serenus, from the in-form Nick Henderson yard, had been off the track since March when going in at Huntingdon despite being a bad drifter in the betting and must be kept on the right side. Silver Groom is only 2lb lower than well beaten in the William Hill Hurdle at Sandown. Kingsfold Pet returns to hurdling after a remote second to Kadastrof on his fencing debut here.
Selection: SECRET SPRING

2.20 PERTEMPS KING GEORGE VI CHASE (GRADE 1) (CLASS A) £100,000 3m Penalty Value £60,980 C4

1 21F-22 BARTON BANK (27) (CD) (Mrs J Mould) D Nicholson 11 11 10 A Maguire
Emerald green, white stars, emerald green cap, white star
2 54-222 CHALLENGER DU LUC (FR) (13) (D) (D A Johnson) M Pipe 7 11 10 A P McCoy B
Royal blue, emerald green sleeves, white cap, emerald green spots
3 3-40SP DJEDDAH (FR) (27) (CD) (J D Martin) F Doumen (Fr) 6 11 10 Mr T Doumen B
Pink & royal blue diamonds, striped sleeves, pink cap, royal blue diamond
4 26P-11 ONE MAN (31) (CD) (J Hales) G Richards 9 11 10 R Dunwoody
Yellow, red star, yellow sleeves, white armlets, yellow cap, red star
5 1/12-2 ROUGH QUEST (13) (CD) (A T A Wates) T Casey 11 11 10 M A Fitzgerald
Navy blue, green sash, cerise cap
6 22F-31 SEE MORE BUSINESS (20) (D) (J Keighley/P Barber) P Nicholls 7 11 10 A Thornton
Black, yellow stars, black sleeves, white armlets, yellow cap
7 6-F211 SENOR EL BETRUTTI (13) (D) (Gerard Nock) Mrs S Nock 8 11 10 C Llewellyn
Purple, emerald green Cross of Lorraine, emerald green cap
8 512-11 SUNY BAY (27) (D) (Uplands Bloodstock) C Brooks 8 11 10 G Bradley
Royal blue, white star, white stars on royal blue sleeves & cap
9 30F-P1 YORKSHIRE GALE (14) (CD) (Bill Naylor) J Gifford 11 11 10 L Aspell
Black, red chevron, hooped cap
– 9 declared –

BETTING: 11-8 One Man, 9-4 Suny Bay, 5-1 Barton Bank, 8-1 Rough Quest, 16-1 Challenger Du Luc, See More Business, Senor El Betrutti, 33-1 Djeddah, 100-1 Yorkshire Gale
1996: One Man 8 11 10 R Dunwoody 8-13 fav (G Richards) 5 ran

FORM GUIDE

Reported better than ever, ONE MAN is poised to follow in the footsteps of Wayward Lad and Desert Orchid, who both landed this prestigious prize three times – the last named going on to make it four. Gordon Richards's grey came home by 14 lengths from Monsieur Le Cure when the race was switched to Sandown two seasons ago – Barton Bank pulled *up before two out – and scored by 12 lengths and nine lengths from Rough Quest and* Barton Bank last term. Barton Bank, who won this in 1993, was clear only to blunder badly and unseat at the last a year later – presenting the race to Algan – and he chased home *Suny Bay at 13 lengths in the Hennessy last time. Yorkshire Gale and Djeddah were both* pulled up in that event. One Man has finished tired in the last two Cheltenham Gold Cups in which *Barton Bank was fourth and second but the selection beat David Nicholson's charge* at Cheltenham – his bogey course – in January and in the Charlie Hall Chase at Wetherby on his return. He should do so again. One Man went on to defeat Viking Flagship nine lengths in the Peterborough Chase over an inadequate two and a half at Huntingdon last month. Rough Quest, second in the 1996 Gold Cup, was having his first race since last year's King George when running very well to finish a six-length second to One Man's stablemate The Grey Monk at Haydock and must progress for the run. Even so, for the forecast Suny Bay is preferred. Charlie Brooks's charge, who wound up last term with a fine effort to finish runner-up in the Grand National, was having his first run since when winning at Haydock last month – See More Business an 18 length third – and justified favouritism in great style in the Hennessy, *giving a 13-length drumming to Barton Bank (only 5lb better).* Senor El Betrutti pulled off the Murphy's-Tripleprint Gold Cup double, each time with Challenger Du Luc runner-up, but his ability to cope with some of these at levels is in doubt.
Selection: ONE MAN

2.55 NETWORK DESIGN INTERNATIONAL NOVICE CHASE (CLASS B) £10,000 2m Pen Value £6,970 C4

1 4-2111 KADASTROF (FR) (18) (CD) (A P Paton) R Dickin 7 11 8 A Thornton
Grey, red striped sleeves & cap
2 6-2111 LAKE KARIBA (8) (D) (Lake Kariba Partnership) P Nicholls 6 11 8 R Dunwoody
Dark green, white chevron, light green sleeves, dark green & white check cap
3 03-2U4 AMBLESIDE (20) (D) (BF) (B M Yin) Mrs S Williams 6 11 0 2nd pref
Dark blue & red (quartered), halved sleeves
4 030P4- INTERMAGIC (238) (D) (J C Fox) J Fox 7 11 0 S Fox
Mauve, maroon stars, mauve sleeves, mauve cap, maroon star
5 0164-2 JOHN DRUMM (27) (D) (Andrew Jenkins) P Webber 6 11 0 M A Fitzgerald
Yellow, emerald green hoops & armlets, yellow cap
6 2-32F3 ZABADI (15) (CD) (BF) (Lady Harris) D Nicholson 5 11 0 A Maguire
Mauve & yellow check, yellow sleeves
– 6 declared –

BETTING: 7-4 Kadastrof, 5-2 Lake Kariba, 7-2 Zabadi, 6-1 John Drumm, 8-1 Ambleside, 16-1 Intermagic
1996: no corresponding race

FORM GUIDE

The ground was not *soft enough for Lake Kariba when he was beaten more than three* lengths by Chief's Song on his chasing debut here in October but he is unbeaten in three starts since – at Newton Abbot, Chepstow and Uttoxeter. Even so, KADASTROF comes here with the same record, following a fencing-bow second behind Wilde Music with victories over course and distance, Warwick and Ludlow. A great stable favourite – he has been with Robin Dickin since his winning juvenile days – Kadastrof is only 2lb worse in with John Drumm than when beating him seven lengths at Warwick and he can complete the four-timer. Zabadi has been disappointing over fences but is only rising six and will improve enough to find a similar event in due course. He is 8lb better in with Lake Kariba than when beaten 12 lengths by Paul Nicholls's charge at Newton Abbot last month.
Selection: KADASTROF

3.25 PERTEMPS DESIGNER HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS B) £10,000 added 3m 110yds Penalty Value £6,607

1 21-111 DARAYDAN (13) (D A Johnson) M Pipe 5 11 10 A P McCoy
Royal blue, emerald green sleeves, white cap, emerald green spots
2 11F-11 FRIENDSHIP (20) (C) (T Benfield/W Brown) N Henderson 5 10 8 M A Fitzgerald
Yellow, brown sleeves, yellow armlets
3 144-04 HAILE DERRING (34) (D) (Mrs V Stockdale) N Twiston-Davies 7 10 3 C Llewellyn
White, black triple diamond, halved sleeves, white cap, black diamond
4 /12-23 CLIFTON SET (21) (C) (BF) (Mrs Christine Fennell) C Mann 6 10 0 D Bridgwater B
Dark green, white stars on sleeves, purple cap
5 3-112U TOBY BROWN (14) (A Stennett & Mrs J M Stennett) D Nicholson 4 10 0 A Maguire
Beige & emerald green check, beige sleeves
6 1-2122 DECYBORG (FR) (25) (D) (BF) (Terry Neill) M Pipe 6 10 0 D Gallagher
White, large red spots & armlets, quartered cap
– 6 declared –

Minimum: 10st. True handicap weights: Clifton Set 9st 12lb, Toby Brown 9st 9lb, Decyborg 9st 3lb.
BETTING: 5-4 Daraydan, 5-2 Friendship, 11-2 Toby Brown, 7-1 Haile Derring, 8-1 Clifton Set, 12-1 Decyborg
1996: Tim 6 10 8 M A Fitzgerald 7-2 (J Jenkins) 5 ran

FORM GUIDE

An interesting affair between Friendship and DARAYDAN and the latter might have the edge despite having to concede his rival 16lb. Friendship, from the in-form Nick Henderson stable, landed a Worcester bumper the season before last and scored twice over timber in 1996-97, while he has a 100 per cent record this term – winning over two miles five furlongs here and over a furlong further at Sandown. The longer trip will pose no problems. That last remark also applies to Daraydan (a good stayer on the Flat), who wound up last season successfully at Ascot and is also unbeaten this term – going in at Cheltenham (twice) and at Newbury in between. Martin Pipe's five-year-old put up a fine display to beat Mighty Moss – who had finished three parts of a length in front of him when they were second and third behind Istabraq in the Royal SunAlliance Hurdle at the Cheltenham Festival – four lengths on his most recent appearance. Haile Derring was a useful type last season with wins at Carlisle, Haydock, Uttoxeter and Ascot and he ran fourth of a big field behind Pharanear in the Gold Card Hurdle Final at the Cheltenham Festival. Nigel Twiston-Davies' runner has weakened towards the finish *in both attempts this term but would pose a threat if back near his best. Clifton Set* finished six lengths in front of Haile Derring when they were second – at 17 lengths – and fourth to Name Of Our Father at Ascot last month but Haile Derring can turn that around with his 5lb pull.
Selection: DARAYDAN

PUNTERS' GUIDE

KEMPTON

1.10: High expectations are held *this season for* **Forest Ivory.** He jumped a little awkwardly before falling two fences from home at Chepstow on his chase debut. He then jumped more fluently to make amends at Wetherby and Bangor. If his fencing continues to improve he will prove very hard to beat. At the likely odds, however, it may be best to side with **FIDDLING THE FACTS,** who jumped with fine agility when she was confidently ridden to beat **Ottowa** by three-and-a-half lengths at Lingfield a fortnight ago. Ottowa seeks revenge, *giving* 7lb less today, but the mare looks a very useful recruit.

* * *

1.45: The threat posed by **Secret Spring** is difficult to assess. Peter Hedger's hurdler is a course-and-distance winner on good to firm *ground, but is something of an* unknown quantity on a softer surface. On his seasonal reappearance over jumps at Cheltenham last month, he did not get into the race on a course to which he is probably unsuited. Back on this flat track, the five-year-old must be feared. Fewer question marks, though, surround **SERENUS.** This four-year-old had something in hand when catching the in-form *Namoodaj at Huntingdon last time* and a 5lb rise in the weights for that win is by no means harsh.

HYPERION'S TV TIPS

2.20: One Man's odds offer little value and it is worth opposing him with **SUNY BAY.** Graham *Bradley's mount has won two* highly competitive events this season by a combined total of 24 lengths and we may not have seen the best of him yet. See **More Business** *and the veteran* **Rough Quest** would come into it on really testing ground but would otherwise struggle to match the pace of the front two in the betting.

* * *

2.55: A fascinating clash between the mud-lovers ***LAKE KARIBA*** and **Kadastrof,** who both like to force the pace. The latter was superior to his rival over hurdles but may meet his match in Lake Kariba, who has taken extremely well to fences. Paul Nicholls's six-year-*old has the additional assistance to-*day of Richard Dunwoody, who takes over from the sidelined Timmy Murphy. **Zabadi,** Adrian Maguire's mount, has yet to show he can recapture his old form. **John Drumm** is therefore likely to be the *main beneficiary* if the top two *were* to cut each other's throats by racing too fast in the early stages.

Newton Abbot loses out

Today's programme suffered a casualty when the meeting at Newton Abbot was called off on Christmas Eve.

Michael Trickey, the clerk of the West Country track, said: "After persistent rain the ground is waterlogged and with further rain forecast we have had no alternative but to abandon."

It is the third year running that this fixture has been lost.

KING GEORGE VI CHASE – 10-YEAR-TALE

	1987	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96
Fate of the favourites:	2	1	1	1	3	1	3	U	1	1
Winner's place in betting:	0	1	1	1	0	1	2jf	0	1	1
Starting prices:	25-1	1-2	4-6	9-4	10-1	1-1	9-2	16-1	11-4	8-13
Winning ages:	8	9	10	11	6	7	7	6	8	8

Profit or loss to £1 stake: Favourites +£3.79. Second Favourites -£7.25
Percentage of winners placed 1st, 2nd or 3rd in last race: 60%
Shortest-priced winner: *Desert Orchid 1-2 (1988)*
Longest-priced winner: Nupsala 25-1 (1987)
Top trainer: F Doumen (4) – Nupsala (1987), The Fellow (1991 & 1992), Algan (1994)
Top Jockey: R Dunwoody (4) – Desert Orchid (1989 & 1990), One Man (1995 & 1996)*
jt = Joint-favourite. * weather forced 1995 race to be run at Sandown in January

FIRST SHOW

Kempton 1.45

Horse	C	H	T
Serenus	5-2	5-2	9-4
Tibetan	2-1	5-2	5-2
Secret Spring	5-1	5-1	5-1
Doctoor	7-1	7-1	6-1
Kingsfold Pet	13-2	8-1	8-1
Noble Colours	14-1	12-1	11-1
Silver Groom	16-1	14-1	14-1
Bless Me Sister	20-1	16-1	20-1

Each way, a fifth the odds, places 1, 2, 3
C – Coral, H – William Hill, T – Tote

King George VI Chase

Horse	C	H	L	T
One Man	11-10	11-8	5-4	6-4
Suny Bay	5-2	9-4	9-4	9-4
Barton Bank	11-2	5-1	5-1	5-1
Rough Quest	9-1	9-1	8-1	6-1
See More Business	14-1	12-1	16-1	16-1
Challenger Du Luc	16-1	20-1	18-1	16-1
Senor El Betrutti	16-1	14-1	20-1	16-1
Djeddah	33-1	33-1	50-1	40-1
Yorkshire Gale	100-1	100-1	66-1	100-1

Each way, a fifth the odds, places 1, 2, 3
C – Coral, H – William Hill, L – Ladbrokes, T – Tote

KING GEORGE VI CHASE – THE ROLL OF WINNERS

Year	Winner	Age & Weight	Trainer	Jockey	SP
1955	Limber Hill	8 11 13	W Dutton	J Power	3-1
1956	Rose Park	10 11 7	P Cazalet	M Scudamore	100-6
1957	Mandarin	6 12 0	F Walwyn	P Madden	7-1
1958	*Lochroe*	*10 11 7*	*P Cazalet*	*A Freeman*	*7-2*
1959	Mandarin	8 11 5	F Walwyn	P Madden	5-2
1960	Saffron Tartan	9 11 7	D Butchers	F Winter	5-2
1961	Abandoned				
1962	Abandoned				
1963	Mill House	6 12 0	F Walwyn	G W Robinson	2-7
1964	Frenchman's Cove	9 11 7	H T Jones	S Mellor	4-11
1965	Arkle	8 12 0	T Dreaper (Irl)	P Taaffe	1-7
1966	*Dormant*	*9 11 0*	*J Wells-Kendrew*	*J King*	*10-1*
1967	Abandoned				
1968	Abandoned				
1969	Titus Oates	7 11 10	*G Richards*	*S Mellor*	*100-30*
1970	Abandoned				
1971	The Dikler	8 11 7	F Walwyn	B Brogan	11-2
1972	Pendil	7 12 0	F Winter	R Pitman	4-5
1973	Pendil	8 12 0	F Winter	R Pitman	30-100
1974	Captain Christy	7 12 0	P Taaffe (Irl)	R Coonan	5-1
1975	Captain Christy	8 12 0	P Taaffe (Irl)	G Newman	11-10
1976	Royal Marshall II	9 11 7	T Forster	G Thorner	16-1
1977	*Bachelor's Hall*	*7 11 7*	*P Cundell*	*M O'Halloran*	*9-2*
1978	Gay Spartan	7 11 10	A Dickinson	T Carmody	3-1
1979	Silver Buck	7 11 10	M Dickinson	T Carmody	3-1
1980	Silver Buck	8 11 10	M Dickinson	T Carmody	9-4
1981	Abandoned				
1982	Wayward Lad	7 11 10	M Dickinson	J Francome	7-2
1983	Wayward Lad	8 11 10	M Dickinson	R Earnshaw	11-8
1984	Burrough Hill Lad	8 11 10	Mrs J Pitman	J Francome	1-2
1985	Wayward Lad	10 11 10	Mrs M Dickinson	G Bradley	12-1
1986	Desert Orchid	7 11 10	D Elsworth	S Sherwood	16-1
1987	Nupsala	8 11 10	F Doumen (Fr)	A Pommier	25-1
1988	*Desert Orchid*	*9 11 10*	*D Elsworth*	*S Sherwood*	*1-2*
1989	Desert Orchid	10 11 10	D Elsworth	R Dunwoody	4-6
1990	Desert Orchid	11 11 10	D Elsworth	R Dunwoody	9-4
1991	The Fellow	6 11 10	*F Doumen (Fr)*	*A Kondrat*	10-1
1992	The Fellow	7 11 10	F Doumen (Fr)	A Kondrat	evens
1993	Barton Bank	7 11 10	D Nicholson	A Maguire	9-2
1994	Algan	6 11 10	*F Doumen (Fr)*	P Chevalier	16-1
1995	One Man*	8 11 10	G Richards	R Dunwoody	11-4
1996	One Man	8 11 10	G Richards	R Dunwoody	8-13

** – race run at Sandown in January*

DOUBLE ENGAGEMENTS

The following horses are doubly engaged today. Each horse will run at their second preference meeting only if their first preference is abandoned.

	First preference Second
Cottage Craft	12.45 Wetherby *2.05 Market Rasen*
Don't Tell Tom	1.30 Huntingdon *3.35 Hereford*
Ham N'Eggs	1.15 Wetherby *1.25 Ayr*
Kadastrof	2.55 Kempton *1.15 Wetherby*
Lime Street Blues	1.30 Huntingdon *2.35 Hereford*
Lord Hastie	3.35 Market Rasen *3.25 Wetherby*
Sireric	1.30 Sedgefield *1.00 Market Rasen*
The Brewer	1.30 Huntingdon *2.35 Hereford*

THE INDEPENDENT
RACING SERVICES
0891 261 +

	LIVE COMMENTARIES	RESULTS
KEMPTON	971	981
WETHERBY	972	982
WINCANTON	973	983
AYR	974	984
HEREFORD	975	985
HUNTINGDON	976	986
MARKET RASEN	970	980
NEWTON ABBOT	970	980
SEDGEFIELD	970	980
WOLVERHAMPTON	970	980

ALL COURSES RESULTS
0891 261 970
Calls cost 50p per minute. ILS plc, Scrutton St EC2A 4PJ

AYR

HYPERION

12.55 Forzair 1.25 Welsh March 2.00 No Finer Man 2.35 Naughty Future 3.10 Nawtinookey 3.40 Pariah

GOING: Soft (Good to Soft in places).
● Left-hand galloping course.
● Course is E of town on A758. **ADMISSION:** Club £12; Grandstand £7. **CAR PARK:** Free.
● **LEADING TRAINERS:** G Richards 33-160 (20.6%), Mrs M Reveley 28-141 (19.9%), J J O'Neill 19-109 (17.4%), P Monteith 16-125 (12.8%).
● **LEADING JOCKEYS:** B Storey 27-156 (16.3%), T Reed 13-121 (10.7%), R Supple 9-41 (22%), J Callaghan 6-61 (9.8%).
● **FAVOURITES:** 169 wins in 382 races (44.2%).
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Parson's Lodge, Blazing Trail, Sagebrush Roller (12.55)

12.55 PORT 'N' BRANDY SELLING HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS G) £2,500 2m

1 4-5PF2 RALLEGIO (25) (CD) P Monteith 8 12 0 I Jardine (7)
2 42-524 PARSON'S LODGE (16) (D) L Lungo 9 10 13 W Dowling (7) B
3 14 FORZAIR (15) (BF) J J O'Neill 5 10 13 R McGrath (3)
4 3P-PP0 BLAZING TRAIL (18) (D) Miss L Russell 9 10 2 D Reid (7) B
5 60-00 MOUNTAIN DREAM (18) R Allan 4 10 0 J Callaghan
6 03/P-0 SYLVAN CELEBRATION (18) J Goldie 6 10 0 B Harding
7 5-00 HUTCHIES LADY (34) R McKellar 5 10 0 A S Smith
8 000 SAGEBRUSH ROLLER (13) J J O'Neill 9 10 0 L Copper (7) B
9 0U60F8 MEADOWLECK (18) W Young 8 10 0 S Taylor (5)
10 0PP- *POLAR WIND (223) N Waggott 8 10 0 M Foster*
– 10 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Mountain Dream 9st 9lb, Sylvan Celebration 9st 4lb, Hutchies Lady 9st 3lb, Sagebrush Roller 9st 2lb, Meadowleck 8st 13lb, Polar Wind 8st 11lb.
BETTING: 15-8 Parson's Lodge, 11-4 Rallegio, 4-1 Forzair, 8-1 Sagebrush Roller, 14-1 Mountain Dream, Hutchies Lady, Meadowleck, 16-1 others

1.25 GOOSE NOVICE CHASE (CLASS E) £4,000 added 2m

1 03P-15 LA RIVIERA (16) (D) J Charlton 5 11 4 Mr M Bradburne (5)
2 2RP0- CITTADINO (253) (CD) C Thornton 7 10 12 M Foster
3 50P-14 COMMON SOUND (11) (D BF) J Barclay 6 10 12 R McGrath (3)
4 3-005 ESQUIMAU (10) G Richards 6 10 12 B Harding
5 2425-4 *HAM N'EGGS (16) (D) M Hammond 6 10 12* 2nd pref
6 6/RPP- PATTER MERCHANT (285) Miss L Russell 8 10 12 D Reid (7)
7 22U603 TEEJAY'N'AITCH (10) (CD) J Goldie 5 10 12 S Taylor (5)
8 123-22 *WELSH MARCH (16) (BF) G M Moore 5 10 12 J Callaghan*
9 0-2500 FAME AND FANTASY (25) (D) A Whillans 6 10 7 A S Smith
– 9 declared –

BETTING: 5-2 Welsh March, 7-2 Ham N'Eggs, 5-1 Cittadino, 8-1 La Riviera, Common Sound, Teejay'n'aitch, 12-1 Esquimau, 20-1 others

2.00 HOURSTONS OF AYR WINTER SALE NOVICE H'DLE (CLASS E) £3,000 2m 4f

1 25-124 HOPEFUL LORD (11) (D BF) P Cheesbrough 5 11 5 A S Smith
2 1PP-PP EASBY JOKER (20) (D) S Kettlewell 9 10 12 R McGrath (3)
3 055-42 *NO FINER MAN (8) G Richards 8 10 12 B Harding*
4 HIRT LODGE J Dixon 6 10 9 I Jardine (7)
5 45-2 POLAR KING (32) C Thornton 4 10 9 M Foster
6 TINDLES BIBLE M Todhunter 5 10 9 J Callaghan
7 00-5 PEAK A BOO (16) D Whillans 6 10 7 S Taylor (5)
– 7 declared –

BETTING: 5-4 No Finer Man, 5-2 Hopeful Lord, 3-1 Polar King, 10-1 Easby Joker, 14-1 Tindles Bible, 33-1 others

2.35 ALADDIN AT THE GAIETY HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS D) £5,000 added 3m 1f

1 PP0-20 BETTER TIMES AHEAD (13) (CD) G Richards 11 12 0 B Harding
2 1U21/ SHINING FOUNTAIN (755) D M Forster 8 11 4 Mr M Bradburne (5)
3 1F13-4 JUDICIOUS CAPTAIN (41) (C) Mrs J Storey 10 10 10 Mr C Storey
4 F20-26 NAUGHTY FUTURE (29) (CD) J J O'Neill 8 10 6 R McGrath (3)
5 *1/UF5- PETER (272) D Whillans 9 10 3 A S Smith*
6 1234-3 SEEKING GOLD (69) (D) J Barclay 8 10 1 M Foster
7 P413P/ HAG'S WAY (511) M Todhunter 7 10 0 J Callaghan
– 7 declared –

BETTING: 2-1 Better Times Ahead, 5-2 Naughty Future, 4-1 Seeking Gold, Judicious Captain, 8-1 Shining Fountain, 20-1 Hag's Way, 33-1 Peter

3.10 TEXSTYLE WORLD SALE NOVICE H'CAP CHASE (CLASS E) £4,000 2m 4f

1 14-123 RACHAEL'S OWEN (16) (D BF) J Goldie 7 11 10 R McGrath (3)
2 1/2-35 TRUE SCOT (11) P Cheesbrough 7 11 8 A S Smith
3 1/4621 MASTER BAVARD (10) P Monteith 9 11 6 (5ex) Mr M Bradburne (5)
4 013P-1 SOLSGIRTH (40) (CD) J Barclay 6 11 4 M Foster
5 4245-P NAWTINOOKEY (16) M Todhunter 7 11 4 J Callaghan B
6 0-232P MUSIC BLITZ (16) Mrs D Thomson 6 10 4 B Harding
– 6 declared –

BETTING: evens Master Bavard, 5-2 Solsgirth, 11-2 Rachael's Owen, 8-1 Music Blitz, 14-1 True Scot, Nawtinookey

3.40 WHISKY MAC HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS D) £4,000 added 2m 4f

1 0303-2 PALACEGATE KING (15) A Whillans 8 11 13 S Taylor (5)
2 1105-3 ROSSEL (USA) (40) (C) P Monteith 4 11 8 I Jardine (7)
3 024-25 PARIAH (16) (D) M Todhunter 8 10 7 J Callaghan
4 135-63 MENSHAAR (USA) (25) L Lungo 5 10 1 W Dowling (7)
5 634/2- BELLS HILL LAD (406) J Barclay 10 10 0 R McGrath (3)
– 5 declared –

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weight: Bells Hill Lad 9st 12lb
BETTING: 2-1 Palacegate King, 9-4 Rossel, 3-1 Pariah, 5-1 Menshaar, 8-1 Bells Hill Lad

SEDGEFIELD

HYPERION

1.00 Kakashda 1.30 Dark Oak 2.00 Executive Design 2.30 Marble Man 3.00 Stylish Interval 3.30 Durano

GOING: Soft.
● Left-hand, undulating course. Easy fences and long run-in.
● Course is 1m SE of town near A689. **ADMISSION:** Paddock £8 (OAPs £4); Course £2. **CAR PARK:** Paddock £2, rest free.
● **LEADING TRAINERS:** Mrs M Reveley 67-231 (29%), J Howard Johnson 20-161 (12.4%), *G M Moore 19-113 (16.8%), J Wade 15-161 (9.3%).*
● **LEADING JOCKEYS:** P Niven 52-173 (30.1%), L Wyer 22-107 (20.6%), N Smith 14-89 (15.7%), T Reed 11-78 (14.1%).
● *FAVOURITES: 222-581 (38.2%).*
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Alicat (1.00), Miss Colette (1.30), Cadeaux Premiere (2.0), Uk Hygiene (2.30).

1.00 RED ONION NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,000 added 3m 3f 110yds

1 02-221 *BIRKDALE (16) L Lungo 6 11 5 R Supple*
2 /231-1 FOR CATHAL (27) Mrs M Reveley 6 11 5 N Smith
3 0-0103 MILL-DOT (17) F Murtagh 5 11 5 C McCormack (5)
4 34P-PP ALICAT (32) J Curtis 6 10 12 Mr S Swiers B
5 26/F-P FOREVER SHY (11) Mrs K Lamb 8 10 12 Miss S Lamb (7)
6 02 KAKASHDA (9) J H Johnson 6 10 12 E Callaghan
7 P3P- SILLY PET (243) C Pogson 7 10 12 D Bentley
– 7 declared –

BETTING: 5-4 For Cathal, 11-8 Birkdale, 7-1 Mill-Dot, 8-1 Kakashda, 25-1 Silly Pet, 33-1 others

1.30 KEN BRIGHT STILL GOING HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS E) £5,000 added 3m 3f

1 /36-3P RUSSIAN CASTLE (15) (CD) J Wade 8 11 11 N Smith
2 54UP41 DARK OAK (23) (C) J Curtis 11 11 8 Mr S Swiers
3 15P-05 TILTY (8) A Streeter 7 11 3 T Eley V
4 PF2-UP ANOTHER VENTURE (16) F Murphy 7 11 3 E Callaghan
5 3-P24P RYE CROSSING (16) (C) T Easterby 7 10 10 F Leahy (3) B
6 U32-34 FERN LEADER (23) (BF) C Grant 7 10 6 Mrs S Grant
7 0/03-3 SIRERIC (15) S Bell 7 10 3 K Johnson
8 4UB32/ KIBBY BANK (721) J H Johnson 8 10 2 R Supple
9 -53UUP OLE OLE (17) (C) Mrs E Moscrop 11 10 0 M Newton (7) V
10 52-506 MISS COLETTE (18) (CD) Mrs D Thomson 9 10 0 L O'Hara B
11 0/422F *TUDOR FELLOW (17) J Wade 8 10 0* C McCormack (5)
– 11 declared –

Minimum: 10st. Ole Ole 9st 11lb, Miss Colette 9st 9lb, Tudor Fellow 9st 8lb.
BETTING: 3-1 Dark Oak, 7-2 Fern Leader, 4-1 Tudor Fellow, 5-1 Sireric, 10-1 Tilty, Another Venture, 12-1 Rye Crossing, Kibby Bank, 14-1 others

2.00 DURHAM INNS LTD NOVICE CHASE (CLASS E) £4,100 added 2m 5f

1 4P-1P1 CHIPPED OUT (16) (CD) M Todhunter 7 11 12 C McCormack (5)
2 6-U APACHE RAIDER (14) F Murphy 5 10 12 L O'Hara
3 51/503 CADEAUX PREMIERE (9) D Smith 6 10 12 F Leahy (3) B
4 3F00/U CALLERNOY (25) D Lamb 7 10 12 J Burke
5 2-U348 CASTLE RED (57) (BF) J Wade 8 10 12 K Johnson
6 232F3- CROWDED HOUSE (F248) B Ellison 9 10 12 Mr R Hale
7 2032/ DAVID'S WAY (527) M Pell 8 10 12 D Bentley
8 1005-3 EXECUTIVE DESIGN (43) Mrs M Reveley 5 10 12 N Smith
9 32F0-4 *JILLS JOY (17) A Streeter 6 10 12 T Eley*
10 /P-124 RIVER CHALLENGE (20) J Upson 6 10 12 R Supple
11 202P0/ SILLARS STALKER (676) (CD) Mrs A Swinbank 9 10 12 Mr C Wilson
12 0P/2-3 STAGE FRIGHT (21) F Murphy 5 10 12 E Callaghan
13 P62-26 THE BIRD O'DONNELL (28) Mrs A Naughton 11 10 12 T J Barry (7)
– 13 declared –

BETTING: evens Executive Design, 5-1 Chipped Out, 6-1 River Challenge, 7-1 Stage Fright, 14-1 Cadeaux Premiere, Castle Red, 20-1 others

2.30 RENT ROLL CUP HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS E) £5,000 added 2m 110yds

1 2FF211 THIS IS MY LIFE (123) (D) Miss M Milligan 8 11 10 E Callaghan
2 3-2134 MARBLE MAN (34) (D) M Pell 7 11 6 D Bentley
3 233-14 VAL DE RAMA (17) (CD) D Smith 8 11 1 R Supple
4 /50-43 SHAHGRAM (48) (C) J Hubbuck 9 10 8 B Grattan (5)
5 23425 XAIPETE (10) (CD) N Mason 5 10 7 L O'Hara
6 PP365- POTATO MAN (300) B Ellison 11 10 3 C McCormack (5)
7 0125-4 KILDRUMMY CASTLE (15) (D) J FitzGerald 5 10 0 F Leahy (3)
8 -3P462 *UK HYGIENE (10) (D) M Hammond 7 10 0 N Horrocks (7) B*
9 -P53P6 SHULTAN (23) J Wade 8 10 0 K Johnson
– 9 declared –

Minimum: 10st. Kildrummy Castle 9st 11lb, UK Hygiene 9st 10lb, Shultan 9st 7lb.
BETTING: 5-2 This Is My Life, 7-2 Kildrummy Castle, 5-1 Val De Rama, 11-2 Marble Man, 7-1 Xaipete, Uk Hygiene, 10-1 Shahgram, 20-1 others

3.00 UNION HALL SIENNA STUD HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,500 2m 5f 110yds

1 0012-1 TOSHIBA TALK (16) (CD) B Ellison 5 11 13 C McCormack (5)
2 16-511 KINDA GROOVY (17) (CD) I Park 8 11 11 N Smith B
3 F-4614 BRANCHER (11) J Turner 8 11 10 R Supple
4 /623-1 BITRAN (9) B Rothwell 7 11 4 (7ex) Mr R Hale
5 531-33 STYLISH INTERVAL (36) (C) (D) D Smith 5 11 2 F Leahy (3)
6 216/18 TOPOTHENORTHRACING (29) (CD) P Beaumont 7 11 2 B Grattan (5)
7 2FF-3P AMAZING SAIL (23) (CD) Miss M Milligan 4 11 1 D Bentley
8 02216/ KITTOCHSIDE LAD (596) (CD) Mrs A Swinbank 7 10 5 D Webb (7)
9 4/P3-0 SPRING CALL (8) (CD) C Pogson 7 10 0 T Hogg (7)
10 01306 DISSINGTON TIMES (23) W McKeown 3 10 0 K Johnson
11 13-550 SHELTON ABBEY (98) (CD) J Wade 11 10 0 E Callaghan B
12 6-3406 BARNSTORMER (18) E Elliott 11 10 0 M H Naughton (5) B
– 12 declared –

BETTING: 3-1 Kinda Groovy, 4-1 Toshiba Talk, Bitran, 7-1 Brancher, 8-1 Topothenorthracing, Amazing Sail, 10-1 Dissington Times, 12-1 others

3.30 HALLGARTH MANOR HOTEL HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,500 2m 1f

1 0-FU55 DURANO (20) T Easterby 6 12 0 N Horrocks (7)
2 -32034 QUANGO (6) (D) J FitzGerald 5 11 12 F Leahy (3)
3 -21134 FATEHALKHAIR (48) (CD) B Ellison 5 11 5 C McCormack (5)
4 *4311-0 KIRSTENBOSCH (11) (D) L Lungo 10 10 13 C Dunne (7)*
5 125-43 DIAMOND BEACH (8) G M Moore 4 10 12 E Callaghan
6 16/062 GENERAL'S ORDERS (11) (CD) J Turner 6 10 0 R Supple
7 -4P304 NOCATCHIM (23) (CD) K Morgan 8 10 0 B Grattan (5) V
8 506505 RUBISLAW (11) Mrs K Lamb 5 10 0 Miss S Lamb (7)
– 8 declared –

BETTING: 3-1 Quango, 7-2 Fatehalkhair, 4-1 Diamond Beach, 9-2 Durano, 5-1 General's Orders, 10-1 Kirstenbosch, Nocatchim, 33-1 Rubislaw

WETHERBY

HYPERION

12.45 Glenbower (nb).15 Ham N'Eggs 1.50 New Inn 2.25 Sparky Gayle 2.55 Cumbrian Challenge 3.25 Foundry Lane

GOING: Good to Soft.
● Left-hand, sharp undulating course. Run-in of 200yds.
● Course is SE of town on B2026. Lingfield station (served by London, Victoria) adjoins course. **ADMISSION:** Members £13, Tattersalls £8, Course £3 (OAPS £2). Accompanied under-16s free. **CAR PARK:** Free.
● *LEADING TRAINERS: G L Moore 9-33 (27.3%), M Pipe 9-48 (18.8%),* J Old 7-23 (30.4%), N Twiston-Davies 7-31 (22.6%), A Turnell 6-28 (21.4%).
● **LEADING JOCKEYS:** C Llewellyn 4-24 (16.7%), J R Kavanagh 4-34 (11.8%), D Gallagher 4-52 (7.7%), *M Richards 4-74 (5.4%).*
● **FAVOURITES:** 150-332 (45.2%).
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: None.

12.45 BOXING DAY NOVICE HANDICAP H'DLE (CLASS D) £3,650 2m 4f 110yds

1 53F0/3 ARDENT SCOUT (11) (D) Mrs S Smith 5 11 10 N Bentley
2 F02F-4 *JOE SHAW (38) Mrs M Reveley 4 11 5* P Niven
3 45P-12 GLENBOWER (18) (CD) M Hammond 5 11 5 Mr C Bonner (3)
4 30-216 JENNIE'S PROSPECT (29) (D) J J O'Neill 6 11 5 P Carberry
5 05022/ COTTAGE CRAFT (777) W Bethell 8 11 0 M Moloney
6 143536 LEAP IN THE DARK (18) (D) Miss L Siddall 8 10 11 T Reid
7 R023-0 ARROGANT HEIR (14) D H Brown 4 10 11 Mr S Durack (7)
8 0-53P SAM CHAMPAGNE (34) T Easterby 5 10 9 L Wyer
9 /630-4 NASAYER (16) N Mason 7 10 7 R Garritty
10 0-032P SECOND FIDDLE (8) O Brennan 7 10 7 M Brennan
11 00P-31 PRIMITIVE HEART (20) (CD) H Alexander 5 10 5 B Storey
12 00/4-4 EBAAD (20) J Norton 6 10 0 J Leigh
13 0F-600 CHAN MOVE (11) W Smith 5 10 0 N Hannity (7)
– 13 declared –

Minimum: 10st. True handicap weights: Ebaad 9st 10lb, Chan Move 8st 5lb.
BETTING: 5-1 Glenbower, Primitive Heart, 6-1 Ardent Scout, Joe Shaw, 8-1 Jennie's Prospect, Leap In The Dark, Second Fiddle, 10-1 others

1.15 BOROUGHBRIDGE NOVICE CHASE (CLASS C) £6,300 added 2m

1 4-2111 KADASTROF (FR) (18) (D) R Dickin 7 11 12 2nd pref
2 0-4222 SHINING EDGE (8) (CD) (BF) T Easterby 5 11 9 doubtful
3 0P0PPP ARBEJAYBUS (11) Miss L Siddall 8 11 4 T Reed B
4 B3P3-0 COURT JOKER (28) H Alexander 5 11 4 B Storey
5 2425-4 HAM N'EGGS (16) (D) M Hammond 6 11 4 R Garritty
6 0P-040 JOLLY HEART (13) O Brennan 7 11 4 M Brennan
– 6 declared –

BETTING: 8-13 Kadastrof, 3-1 Shining Edge, 7-1 Ham N'Eggs, 16-1 Jolly Heart, 20-1 Court Joker, 25-1 Arbejaybus

1.50 ST JOHN AMBULANCE HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS C) £5,000 added 2m

1 4-22P *NEW INN (13) (D) S Gollings 6 12 0* Mr S Durack (5)
2 141-30 STASH THE CASH (27) (D) M Hammond 6 11 11 R Garritty
3 01-2P1 DR BONES (20) (CD) F Murphy 4 11 8 P Carberry
4 4420F- KAITAK (237) (CD) T Easterby 6 11 7 L Wyer
5 11/222 HOUSE OF DREAMS (27) G M Moore 5 10 13 N Bentley
6 40224- SAMANID (211) (D) Miss L Siddall 5 10 9 T Reed
– 6 declared –

BETTING: 15-8 New Inn, 9-4 Dr Bones, 4-1 House Of Dreams, 7-1 Stash The Cash, 8-1 Kaitak, Samanid

2.25 ROWLAND MEYRICK HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS B) £20,000 3m 1f

1 111-4 SPARKY GAYLE (41) (BF) C Parker 7 11 10 B Storey
2 3U65-3 AVRO ANSON (14) M Camacho 9 11 7 P Niven
3 332-04 MAJOR BELL (13) (D) A Whillans 9 11 1 L Wyer
4 4-2111 STRATH ROYAL (20) (CD) O Brennan 11 10 10 M Brennan
5 2111-2 COLONEL IN CHIEF (20) (CD) G Richards 7 10 4 P Carberry
– 5 declared –

BETTING: 2-1 Colonel In Chief, 11-4 Sparky Gayle, 4-1 Major Bell, 9-2 Avro Anson, Strath Royal

2.55 SUPERMASTER HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS B) £10,000 added 2m 4f 110yds

1 23-405 ROYAL MOUNTBROWNE (13) (D) Miss M Rowland 9 11 10 P Midgley (3)
2 4-6111 CUMBRIAN CHALLENGE (20) (CD) T Easterby 8 10 13 L Wyer
3 2214-3 CHIEF MINISTER (40) (C D BF) M Hammond 8 10 8 R Garritty
4 /2130- WHISPERING STEEL (253) (D) G Richards 11 10 8 B Storey
5 13/3P- NORTHANTS (306) (C) (D) W Storey 11 10 0 M Moloney
6 213323 BRAMBLEBERRY (9) (C) (D) Mrs S Smith 8 10 0 P Carberry
– 6 declared –

Minimum: 10st. True h'cap weights: Northants 9st 9lb, Brambleberry 8st 13lb.
BETTING: 11-8 Cumbrian Challenge, 3-1 Chief Minister, 9-2 Whispering Steel, 13-2 Northants, 7-1 Brambleberry, 10-1 Royal Mountbrowne

3.25 CHRISTMAS NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS D) £3,650 added 2m

1 12 FOUNDRY LANE (13) (D) Mrs M Reveley 6 11 4 P Niven
2 53 ALPINE HIDEAWAY (16) M W Easterby 4 10 12 P Midgley (3)
3 0- CRAIGIE BOY (F174) N Bycroft 7 10 12 N Bentley
4 0 FLORENTINO (13) Mrs V Ward 4 10 12 Mr S Durack (5)
5 0 GIFTBOX (USA) (22) N Bycroft 5 10 12 M Moloney
6 6 HOH EXPRESS (29) Mrs J Ramsden 5 10 12 R Garritty
7 P-P INYOUGOBLUE (23) H Alexander 5 10 12 T Reed
8 121 JUSTIN MAC (35) (D) J FitzGerald 6 10 12 P Carberry
9 40 LORD HASTIE (USA) (13) N Tinkler 9 10 12 2nd pref
10 0-6 MO'S BOY (6) Mrs S Smith 6 10 12 S Porritt (7)
11 2/59 MR TEES COMPONENTS (47) Mrs M Reveley 5 10 12 G Lee
12 8 PROLIFIC AGENCY (17) F Murphy 4 10 12 Mr C Bonner (3)
13 RUSK (F63) T Easterby 4 10 12 L Wyer
14 SHARDANTE W Bethell 4 10 12 M Brennan
15 30 SQUANDAMANIA (32) J Norton 4 10 12 R Burns (7)
16 03P/03 WHATDIDYOUSAY (23) B Bousfield 9 10 12 B Storey
17 0-4 SHARLEY COP (15) M Camacho 5 10 7
– 17 declared –

BETTING: 13-8 Foundry Lane, 11-4 Justin Mac, 6-1 Alpine Hideaway, 8-1 Mr Tees Components, Rusk, 10-1 Prolific Agency, 14-1 others

WINCANTON

HYPERION

12.50 Just Jasmine 1.20 Storm Run 1.55 GLITTER ISLE (nap) 2.30 None Stirred 3.00 Danger Baby 3.30 Negative Equity

GOING: Good to Soft.
● Right-hand, galloping course. Run-in of 200yd.
● *Course is NE of town on B3081. ADMISSION: Members £14;* Tattersalls £9; Course £4 (Under-16s free). **CAR PARK:** Free
● **LEADING TRAINERS:** K Bailey 23-69 (33.3%), J Gifford 16-72 (22.2%), G Hubbard 13-61 (21.3%), N Henderson 11-38 (28.9%).
● **LEADING JOCKEYS:** N Williamson 15-70 (21.4%), M Brennan 7-51 (13.7%), J A McCarthy 6-38 (15.8%), R Thornton 5-15 (33.3%).
● **FAVOURITES:** 211-489 (43.1%)
BLINKERED FIRST TIME: Jet Rules (2.30).

12.50 FATHER XMAS MARES NOVICE HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,000 added 2m

1 12P4P0 DOLCE NOTTE (4) M Pipe 7 11 3 C Maude
2 43-301 *JUST JASMINE (25) (D) K Bishop 5 11 3 R Greene*
3 0 ARDENT BRIDE (25) J Gifford 4 10 10 P Hide
4 0- AVONCLIFF (268) J King 4 10 10 T Dascombe
5 20 *DAISY (37) (BF) Mrs J Pitman 4 10 10 R Farrant*
6 0 FRINGE BENEFIT (30) J Gifford 6 10 10 S Laird (7)
7 30/0-0 KENTFORD TINA (31) J Mullins 6 10 10 A Bates (5)
8 421-44 KINNAHALLA (11) G Balding 5 10 10 B Fenton
9 0-P0 LUCYS RED SLIPPER (13) P Jones 5 10 10 Sophie Mitchell (5)
10 214-14 POTTER AGAIN (37) (BF) D Nicholson 5 10 10 R Johnson
11 34-066 SALLY SCALLY (15) A Hobbs 5 10 10 P Holley
12 0 SILENT ROSE (25) M Pitman 4 10 10 L Harvey
13 TREMLOCH Miss K George 6 10 10 D Slattery (7)
– 13 declared –

BETTING: 9-4 Potter Again, 5-1 Daisy, 6-1 Just Jasmine, 7-1 Dolce Notte, Kinnahalla, 8-1 Ardent Bride, Kentford Tina, 10-1 others

1.20 HARRY DUFOSEE HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS D) £5,000 added 2m

1 636-32 *MORSTOCK (62) (CD) R Hodges 7 11 10* T Dascombe
2 243-P5 CLIFTON GAME (37) B R Millman 7 11 5 D Salter (5)
3 1F-1F1 STORM RUN (34) (D) P Nicholls 7 11 5 R Johnson
4 242-25 THE CARROT MAN (34) (D) P Winkworth 9 11 3 P Hide
5 222614 WHO'S TO SAY (30) (D BF) Dr P Pritchard 11 10 11 Dr P Pritchard
6 2132-6 NORDIC VALLEY (196) (D) M Pipe 6 10 10 C Maude
7 164-62 TROUVAILLE (45) (D) A Turnell 6 10 3 L Harvey
8 U2-P33 *ROBINS PRIDE (11) (CD) C Popham 7 10 0 2nd pref*
– 8 declared –

Minimum weight. 10st. True handicap weight: Robins Pride 9st 13lb
BETTING: 7-4 Storm Run, 5-1 Morstock, Nordic Valley, 6-1 Trouvaille, Robins Pride, 10-1 Clifton Game, The Carrot Man, Who's To Say

1.55 MID SEASON CHASE (INTERMEDIATE) (CLASS B) £10,000 added 2m 5f

1 1-1030 STATELY HOME (34) (D) P Bowen 6 11 12 R Johnson
2 2111-21 NORTHERN STARLIGHT (13) (C) (D) M Pipe 6 11 8 C Maude
3 2123-0 AROUND THE GALE (34) (D) D Gandolfo 6 11 4 L Harvey
4 /216- GLITTER ISLE (289) (D) J Gifford 7 11 4 P Hide
5 36-2U3 KOO'S PROMISE (10) (CD) C Popham 6 10 13 R Greene
6 121253 AMLAH (USA) (21) P Hobbs 5 10 12 R Farrant
7 11-5U4 WAYWARD KING (31) R Hodges 5 10 12 T Dascombe
– 7 declared –

BETTING: 5-4 Northern Starlight, 7-2 Stately Home, 9-2 Around The Gale, 13-2 Glitter Isle, Amlah, 16-1 Koo's Promise, 33-1 Wayward King

2.30 GOLD CARD HANDICAP HURDLE (QUALIFIER) (CLASS B) £7,000 2m 6f

1 F0-PF2 BUCKHOUSE BOY (9) D Nicholson 7 11 10 R Johnson
2 /RR30- DANJING (F233) M Pipe 5 11 8 C Maude B
3 /0?0-6 *JET RULES (20) Mrs J Pitman 7 11 4 R Farrant B*
4 1U66- HARBOUR ISLAND (289) M Pipe 5 11 0 Mr G Elliott (5)
5 202/12 IVOR'S FLUTTER (20) (D) D Elsworth 8 10 12 A Procter
6 1P-153 SPRING MARATHON (27) Mrs N Dutfield 7 10 9 P Holley
7 21F-23 EAU DE COLOGNE (30) (BF) Mrs L Richards 5 10 9 Sophie Mitchell (5)
8 2045-2 OLYMPIAN (41) (D) J Neville 10 10 8 L Harvey B
9 210234 SHERIFF (20) J Hills 6 10 7 B Fenton
10 1226-1 NINE O THREE (15) A Hobbs 8 10 6
11 /31-21 NONE STIRRED (23) (D) J Gifford 7 10 0 P Hide
12 F511P- AMAZON EXPRESS (470) (D) P Bowen 8 10 0 *doubtful*
13 2030- MUTANASSIB (288) M Pipe 4 10 0 C Durham (7)
14 PP005/ PONDERING (602) M Pipe 7 10 0 J Huet (7) V
– 14 declared –

Minimum: 10st. Amazon Express 9st 9lb, Mutanassib 9st 8lb, Pondering 9st 3lb
BETTING: 5-1 Danjing, 6-1 Buckhouse Boy, Ivor's Flutter, 8-1 Eau de Cologne, Olympian, Nine O Three, None Stirred, 10-1 others

3.00 LORD STALBRIDGE HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS B) £10,000 added 3m 1f 110yds

1 42P2-1 SUNLEY BAY (36) (CD) P Nicholls 11 11 10 Mr R Nuttall
2 13-P52 LINTON ROCKS (21) P Nicholls 8 11 4 R Johnson
3 11313 DANGER BABY (27) (D) P Bowen 7 11 2 C Maude B
4 11-FU3 JULTARA (13) (BF) I Williams 8 10 11 R Farrant
5 14-534 FOOLS ERRAND (29) (CD) G Balding 7 10 9 B Fenton
6 351/4U *BRAVE HIGHLANDER (21) (C) J Gifford 9 10 8 P Hide*
7 420-P3 BEAUREPAIRE (15) (D) R Alner 8 10 3 P Holley
– 7 declared –

BETTING: 11-4 Linton Rocks, 3-1 Sunley Bay, 7-2 Jultara, 4-1 Danger Baby, 8-1 Beaurepaire, 10-1 Fools Errand, Brave Highlander

3.30 PARKERS CATERERS NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE (CLASS E) £3,000 2m

1 234F6- MR DARCY (270) (BF) M Pipe 5 11 11 C Maude
2 4-334 MILFORD SOUND (20) P Hobbs 4 11 7 L Harvey
3 0-54 CABALLUS (USA) (22) Mrs J Pitman 7 11 4 R Farrant
4 2F6/3- FABULOUS MTOTO (F147) M Saunders 7 11 3 P Hide
5 2P-533 WELTON ARSENAL (15) K Bishop 5 11 1 R Johnson
6 35-065 RUN FOR COVER (37) Mrs P Dutfield 5 11 0 P Holley
7 06330 LOTSCHBERG EXPRESS (16) D Gandolfo 5 10 13 Sophie Mitchell (5)
8 005 NEGATIVE EQUITY (22) A Turnell 5 10 13 C Rae (7)
9 4853 GALACIA (25) R Alner 5 10 12 N Willmington (7)
10 /40P0- DORMY THREE (F221) R Hodges 7 10 3 T Dascombe
11 /558-4 ILANDRA (F31) C Popham 5 10 3 R Greene
12 F00-4P CATEMPO (18) (BF) G McCourt 7 10 0 A Bates (5)
13 053-6 SONG OF KENDA (52) B R Millman 5 10 0 D Salter (5)
14 FP5253 BET WILTSHIRE (18) P Channings 5 10 0 B Fenton
– 14 declared –

Minimum, 10st. Catempo 9st 10lb, Song Of Kenda & Bet Wiltshire 9st 6lb.
BETTING: 3-1 Milford Sound, 9-2 Mr Darcy, 13-2 Welton Arsenal, 8-1 Caballus, Galacia, Ilandra, 10-1 Lotschberg Express, 12-1 others

SPORTING QUIZ OF THE YEAR

WINNERS AND LOSERS

1 Who scored his first century in 25 Test matches but still ended up on the losing side?

2 Who lost the Johannesburg battle but won the South African war?

3 Who lost 8-4 on the final day but still won?

4 Who lost his place in the England team but came off the bench to inspire victory in Cardiff?

5 Who survived their final-day shoot-out but lost their home?

6 Who scored 16 points, a record for a British player in a home match against Australia, but ultimately ended up on the losing side?

7 Which England team won at the start and the end but lost too many in the middle?

8 Who lost at Villa Park in May but were reprieved by results at Elland Road and Selhurst Park?

9 Who won at Wembley and drew in Rome but still lost out?

10 Who was happy to lose all his hair in Durban?

GROUNDS FOR DEBATE: WHERE WERE THESE PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN?

STRANGE BUT TRUE

1 When was rain in the desert not welcome?

2 Which Irishman's pursuit of major success was harmed by an unscheduled visit to a Scottish beach?

3 Why was Georgi Kinkladze at Wembley when Manchester City were not?

4 Whose world title challenge ended in tears?

5 How did a chicken farmer humiliate England?

6 Which Romanian footballer made a return trip to Spain via the East End of London?

7 When did Linda get the better of Gazza?

8 How did 13 contenders lose out to a winning pickpocket at Epsom?

9 Who enjoyed success in Georgia after an unlikely opening score of 40-30?

10 What caused Venus Williams and Ginger Helgeson Nielson to scuttle away during a tennis match in the Lipton Championships at Key Biscayne?

AROUND THE WORLD

1 Who recorded the first Australian success in New York for 24 years?

2 Which steeplechaser won on his debut for Britain and helped his team to victory in Munich?

3 Which American led a Swedish team to victory in South Africa after the opening battle of a 31,000-mile contest?

4 Which Belgian struck three goals past an Irishman in the space of 18 days to help knock him out of two competitions?

5 How did Love conquer all in New York?

6 Which 16-year-old's 40-match winning run was ended by a 19-year-old in Paris?

7 Who won in France for the first time in 48 years - and will hope to do so again next year?

8 Which German won by just over nine minutes in a three-week race that finished in Paris?

9 Who made up for a Wembley penalty miss by scoring in Minsk?

10 Who needed only 95 seconds to leave his opponent pole-axed in Atlantic City?

THE INVADERS

1 Which Swiss came to London and beat a record set 110 years earlier by the daughter of a wealthy Cheshire cotton broker?

2 Which Finn was on top of the world after finishing sixth in Cheltenham?

3 When did a Finn's retirement enable a Canadian to triumph in Northamptonshire?

4 Which American enjoyed major success in Britain after having to qualify for the same event on his two previous visits?

5 Who needed only 94 minutes to emulate Rod Laver?

6 Who returned to Wales 25 years after a famous defeat to inflict a crushing 81-3 victory?

7 Which Italian inspired his team to a winning debut on Merseyside in August?

8 Which Australian secured his fourth world title by motoring to an unbeatable 121-point lead with victory in Britain?

9 How did a Frenchman and a German thwart British ambitions on the same day at a new stadium?

10 Which foreign recruit bowed out of British sport with the following words: "I now wish to do other things. I always planned to retire when I was at the top."

FIFTEEN MINUTES OF FAME

How did they hit the headlines?

1 Khodadad Azizi

2 Bohdan Ulihrach

3 Phil Sharpe

4 Sandrine Testud

5 Karl Le Tissier

6 Amy Kavanagh

7 Jamie Hewitt

8 John Huston

9 Emily Drumm

10 Le Bar Toulzac

WHO SAID IT?

1 "If I knock at the door often enough, as I seem to be doing, especially in this tournament, the door will open one day."

2 "It would have been great to get my 22nd victory, but we have shown all the field a clean pair of heels. This is a bloody good result and everyone should be pleased with it."

3 "We're 100 per cent behind him, but as much as I want him to carry on I love him too much to try and influence that decision if it's not right for him."

4 "Only an hour before the match I'd been sitting in the dressing-room alongside all the players I had looked up to since I've been a kid. I've got videos of some of them and now all of a sudden I was out on the same pitch as the Paul Inces and the Paul Gascoignes. It was fantastic."

5 "I don't think I have to prove myself as an athlete and they have not really listened to the medical situation I have had... The thing that really upset me is that no one contacted me to tell me about this. No one had the decency or the courtesy just to phone me."

6 "The ref was absolutely magnificent. It is the fairest performance I have seen from a referee for years."

7 "I looked at the Sheffield players coming off the pitch just now. Their world had caved in for the time being. That was what we had to suffer last season."

8 "It was simply a typical racing accident, one of those things that happen. Jacques got a bad start and I just went for the gap on the inside."

9 "I never thought he would try to take me out because he isn't that type of sportsman. But he obviously drove to make things as difficult for me as possible."

10 "Jacques cut in and didn't try to brake at all. Certainly, I closed the door. It was clearly about winning it all or nothing, and there was nothing more to lose."

RECORDS AND LANDMARKS

1 Where did an Ethiopian lose two world records on the same night to two Kenyans?

2 Who extended their unbeaten run in Cardiff to 14 years with a victory by the narrowest of margins?

3 Which England captain reached her century at the Almondvale Stadium in Livingston?

4 Who had every reason to feel bullish after ending a 16-year wait?

5 Which French race was won in a time nearly two seconds faster than in any of its previous 75 runnings?

6 Who was poles apart for a record sixth time in a row?

7 Who made history by winning in two countries on the same day?

8 Who broke a series of records by scoring 52 points in Paris, 29 in London and 68 in Edinburgh?

9 Which Welsh team emulated their successes of 1948 and 1969 by winning in 1997?

10 Which team's hopes of recording an unprecedented 12th successive Test victory in a calendar year were denied by a late kick?

ANSWERS

Photographs
Top row (left-to-right): Wembley (FA Cup final); Old Trafford (England v South Africa football), Newlands, Cape Town (South Africa v Lions first Test).
Middle row (left to right): Old Trafford (Rugby League Premiership final); Old Trafford (England v New Zealand rugby union).
Bottom row (left to right): Melbourne Cricket Ground (Australia v Iran, football World Cup play-off); Bisan Bridge (Fifth Test, England v Australia); Queen's Club, London (Stella Artois tennis tournament).

Winners and losers
1 Mark Taylor, the Australian captain, scored 129 in the First Test against England at Edgbaston but was unable to prevent a nine-wicket defeat.
2 The Lions rugby union team, who lost the third Test but won the series against South Africa.
3 The European Ryder Cup team, who beat the United States despite losing the final-day singles.
4 Jeremy Guscott, who helped England beat Wales 34-13 to win the triple crown in rugby union's Five Nations' Championship.
5 Brighton and Hove Albion, who drew with Hereford to avoid relegation from the Football League but had to move out of their Goldstone Ground home after it was sold to developers.

Around the world
1 Patrick Rafter, who became the first Australian tennis player to win the US Open men's singles title since John Newcombe in 1973.
2 Robert Hough's victory in the British athletics team win the European Cup.
3 Paul Gerard, skipper of the Swedish yacht EF Language, won the first leg of the Whitbread Round the World race.
4 Luc Nilis scored Belgium's winner against Shay Given in a World Cup play-off against the Republic of Ireland. He also scored twice against the same goalkeeper when PSV Eindhoven played Newcastle United in the Champions' League.
5 Pete Sampras took 94 minutes to oust Cedric Pioline for his fourth Wimbledon title, which equalled Rod Laver's number of Wimbledon wins.
6 Martina Hingis, who lost to Iva Majoli in the women's singles final at the French Open tennis tournament.
7 The England football team, who beat France 1-0 in Montpellier in the Tournoi de France.
8 Jan Ullrich, who won the Tour de France.
9 Gary McAllister, who missed a penalty for Scotland against England in *Euro 96*, scored the winning goal from the spot in Scotland's 1-0 World Cup victory away to Belarus.
10 Lennox Lewis, who reclaimed his World Boxing Council heavyweight title with a first-round victory over the Polish-born Andrzej Golota.

The invaders
1 Marina Hingis, who became the youngest winner of the women's singles title at Wimbledon since Lottie Dod.
2 Tommi Makinen, who won the World Rally Championship by finishing sixth in the RAC Rally, which finished at Cheltenham.
3 Mika Hakkinen's retirement six laps from the end helped Jacques Villeneuve win the British Grand Prix at Silverstone.
4 Justin Leonard, who won the Open golf championship at the third attempt.
5 Davis Love won the US PGA golf championship.
6 Andy Farrell, captain of the Great Britain rugby league team, scored 16 points in a 20-12 victory over Australia but his team lost the series 2-1.
7 The England cricket team, who won the first and last Tests but lost the Ashes series 3-2.
8 Soulshipton, who kept their place in the Premiership despite losing at Aston Villa on the final day of the season.
9 The Italian football team, who were beaten by England in the chase for automatic qualification for the World Cup finals.
10 Ian McGeechan, the Lions rugby union coach, who lived up to his pre-match promise by having his head shaved after his team's series victory over South Africa.

Fifteen minutes of fame
1 Khodadad Azizi scored the goal which earned Iran a 2-2 draw against Australia in Melbourne and a place in the World Cup finals next year.
2 Bohdan Ulihrach of the Czech Republic became the first player to beat Pete Sampras in 1997 when he beat the Wimbledon champion at Indian Wells in California in March.
3 Phil Sharpe was the stable lad who stayed at Alnitar to lead to the Grand National horses after the course had been evacuated because of a bomb scare.
4 Sandrine Testud of France knocked Monica Seles, the No 2 seed, out of Wimbledon.
5 Karl Le Tissier told a radio station that his brother Matthew would play for England against Italy at Wembley – before Glenn Hoddle had announced his team.
6 Amy Kavanagh, a 14-year-old schoolgirl from Chesham, played a mock rally against Mark Philippoussis at the final of the Stella Artois tennis tournament at Queen's when Goran Ivanisevic handed her his racket after failing to return one of the Australian's serves.
7 Jamie Hewitt scored the last minute qualifier which earned Chesterfield an FA Cup semi-final replay against Middlesbrough.
8 John Huston led after the first round of the Masters golf tournament in Augusta.
9 Emily Drumm caught out the England cricket captain Mike Atherton in a bonfire match in New Zealand.
10 Le Bar Toulzac was the French bar where Brive and Pontypridd rugby union players fought after their thrilling Heineken European Cup match.

Who said it?
1 Colin Montgomerie, still searching for his first win in a major. Tees on losing by one stroke to Ernie Els in the final of golf's US Open.
2 Damon Hill after finishing second in his much-maligned Arrows car at the Hungarian Grand Prix.
3 David Lloyd, the England cricket coach, on whether Mike Atherton should stay on as captain after the first series defeat by Australia.
4 Rio Ferdinand on his England football debut against Cameroon at Wembley.
5 Roger Black after learning via the media that the British athletics selectors had not picked him for the World Championships. He had been sufering from a virus and had been unable to prove his form and fitness.
6 Glenn Hoddle, the England coach, on the Dutchman Mario van der Ende's performance in the crucial World Cup qualifier against Italy in Rome.
7 Steve Coppell, the Crystal Palace manager, after his team's last-minute triumph over Sheffield United, ed in the First Division play-off final at Wembley.
8 Eddie Irvine, who collided with Jacques Villeneuve at the start of the Australian Grand Prix.
9 Michael Schumacher after his Jacques Villeneuve had cut across him to take the lead at the start of the season's penultimate grand prix in Japan.
10 Michael Schumacher after his collision with Jacques Villeneuve at the Grand Prix of Europe. Despite the collision, Villeneuve went on to win the world title.

Strange but true
1 The Dubai World Cup, the world's richest horse race, was delayed for five days because of rain at the Nad El Sheba course.
2 Darren Clarke, who had led the Open golf championship at Royal Troon but never recovered after driving on to the beach at the second hole in his final round.
3 He played for Georgia against England in a World Cup qualifying match.
4 Oliver McCall, who burst into tears in the ring during his world heavyweight boxing title fight against Lennox Lewis in Las Vegas.
5 Eddo Brandes, an amateur cricketer for Zimbabwe, took a hat-trick to help win the third one-day international against England.
6 Florin Radulescu, who rejoiced Espoirs Celebre.
7 Linda Bulthezel, the South African midfielder, injured Paul Gascoigne in a tackle during England's 2-1 victory at Old Trafford in May.
8 Benny The Dip (named after a pickpocket) won the 14-runner Derby at Epsom.
9 Tiger Woods, who won the US Masters after an outward nine of 40 and an inward nine of 30 in the first round at Augusta.
10 A car found its way into the stands and caused panic among the spectators.

Records and landmarks
1 Kenya's Daniel Komen and Paul Tergat broke Haile Gebreselasie's 5,000m and 10,000m world records at the Ivo Van Damme memorial athletics meeting in Brussels.
2 The Ireland rugby union team, who beat Wales 26-25 in rugby union's Five Nations' Championship.
3 Gillian Coulard, the captain of the England women's football team, won her 100th cap against Scotland.
4 The Bradford Bulls rugby league team, who won the Super League, 16 years after their last championship success in the old First Division.
5 The Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe horse race, won in a record time by Peintre Celebre.
6 Sergei Bubka, who won the World Championship pole vault for the sixth time in succession.
7 Tim Henman, who won at the British National Championships in Telford and at the ATP Tour Championship in Hanover.
8 The South African rugby union team beat France, England and Scotland in successive internationals.
9 Glamorgan, who won their third cricket County Championship.
10 The All Blacks rugby union team, who were held to a 26-26 draw by England at Twickenham thanks to a late penalty.

Palace to offer Zohar as they deal for Dublin

Crystal Palace are ready to offer the Israeli midfield player Itzhak Zohar to Coventry City as part of a swap deal that would bring Dion Dublin to Selhurst Park.

Steve Coppell, the Palace manager, has been unable to give Zohar a regular game since signing him from the Belgian side Royal Antwerp for £1m. Now Palace are ready to offer Zohar plus £3m for Dublin. Gordon Strachan, the the *Coventry manager, may be prepared* to sell Dublin after signing *the Romanian striker* Voriel Moldovan for £3.25m.

The Everton manager Howard Kendall is hoping to finalise terms and sign Mickael Madar to a contract by midday today, so that the French striker can be in his team for the game with Bolton on Sunday. Madar is expected to agree to a contract worth around £14,000 a week at Goodison, which means he will take a cut from his current employers, the Spanish club Deportivo La Coruña. Madar went back to Spain on Christmas Eve to sort out a final payment from Deportivo.

The Everton goalkeeper Neville Southall will play his first game for Southend United today, having agreed to join the Second Division club on a month's loan. The 39-year-old Welsh international takes over from Simon Royce at Brentford. Royce is ruled out by a one-match suspension after being sent off at Fulham in an FA Cup tie earlier this month.

Alvin Martin, the Southend manager, is delighted with the deal, and said: "I felt it was the right time to bring somebody of Neville's stature to the club. He's got a massive presence. It will be great for the supporters to see him here and hopefully he'll lift the whole place."

The Middlesbrough *striker* Chris Freestone has joined Second Division Northampton for £75,000. The 26-year-old has spent three weeks on loan with the Cobblers. The Charlton striker Steve Jones has returned to his former club Bournemouth.

The Southampton manager David Jones has failed in a bid to sign the German midfield player Ralf Weber from Eintracht Frankfurt. The Saints *had agreed a £1m deal* with Eintracht but Weber decided not to travel to the Dell for talks. Jones will make a decision next week on whether to sign the Danish international full-back Jens Risager, who is on trial from Brondby.

Police have cast doubt on reports suggesting that a Far East betting *syndicate interfered* with Monday night's abandoned game at Selhurst Park. It had been alleged that Asian businessmen were behind the floodlight failure during the Premier League game between Wimbledon and Arsenal.

Nottingham Forest and 16 of their former players have started court action against Anderlecht over the 1984 Uefa Cup bribery scandal. "The writ has been served," Forest's Belgian lawyer Filip Goemans said on Christmas Eve. "We had set today as the deadline but since we did not get a positive reaction, I was ordered by my clients to issue a summons."

The Belgian club's former chairman Constant Vanden Stock admitted in September having paid around £16,000 as a "loan" to the Spanish referee in the second leg of the 1984 Uefa Cup semi-final which they won 3-0. Forest, who had won the first leg 2-0, had a goal controversially disallowed in the return leg.

Alan Nixon

Collymore assault charge

The Aston Villa stiker Stan Collymore has been charged with assault. Collymore, 26, was arrested at an address in Cannock, Stafforshire on Christmas Eve, and has been bailed to appear before magistrates in the town.

Collymore, an England international, joined Villa from Liverpool in the summer for £7m. He joined Liverpool from Nottingham Forest in 1995 for what was then a British record fee of £8.5m.

Despite being a regular with Villa this season, his performances have been widely criticised. Collymore was due to play for Villa against Spurs today.

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP: HOW THEY STAND

		Pl	Pts	GD	Home W	Home D	Home L	Home F	Home A	Away W	Away D	Away L	Away F	Away A	Form (most recent on right)	Upcoming matches
1	Man Utd	19	43	+32	8	1	0	28	4	5	3	2	17	9	WWWWW	Sunday Coventry (A); 10 Jan Tottenham (H); 19 Jan Southampton (A); 31 Jan Leicester (H)
2	Blackburn	19	39	+17	7	2	1	23	10	4	4	1	13	9	WLWWW	Sunday C Palace (H); 10 Jan Derby (A); 17 Jan Aston Villa (H); 31 Jan Liverpool (A)
3	Chelsea	19	38	+26	6	1	1	16	6	6	1	4	29	13	WWWDW	Monday Southampton (A); 10 Jan Coventry (H); 18 Jan Everton (A); 31 Jan Barnsley (H)
4	Leeds	19	34	+9	5	2	3	15	11	5	2	2	13	8	WWDDW	Sunday Aston Villa (H); 10 Jan Arsenal (A); 17 Jan Sheff Wed (H); 31 Jan C Palace (A)
5	Liverpool	18	31	+14	6	0	3	20	9	3	4	2	11	8	LWLWW	Sunday Newcastle (A); 10 Jan Wimbledon (H); 17 Jan Leicester (A); 20 Jan Newcastle (H)
6	Arsenal	18	30	+11	5	2	2	19	7	3	4	2	13	14	WLLWL	Sunday Tottenham (A); 10 Jan Leeds (H); 17 Jan Coventry (A); 31 Jan Southampton (H)
7	Derby	19	29	+6	6	3	0	19	5	2	2	6	14	22	LWDDD	Sunday Barnsley (A); 10 Jan Blackburn (H); 17 Jan Wimbledon (A); 29 Jan Tottenham (H)
8	Leicester	19	27	+5	3	5	3	12	10	4	1	3	11	8	DWDLL	Sunday Sheff Wed (H); 10 Jan Aston Villa (A); 17 Jan Liverpool (H); 31 Jan Man Utd (A)
9	Newcastle	18	26	-2	5	3	3	12	11	2	2	3	8	11	LLDDL	Sunday Liverpool (H); 10 Jan Sheff Wed (A); 17 Jan Bolton (H); 20 Jan Liverpool (A)
10	West Ham	19	25	-6	7	0	1	17	6	1	1	9	8	25	WWLWL	Sunday Wimbledon (A); 10 Jan Barnsley (H); 17 Jan Tottenham (A); 31 Jan Everton (H)
11	Wimbledon	18	23	-2	3	2	5	11	14	3	3	2	8	7	WLLWD	Sunday West Ham (H); 10 Jan Liverpool (A); 17 Jan Derby (H); 31 Jan Sheff Wed (A)
12	Aston Villa	19	22	-5	4	2	3	12	13	2	2	6	8	12	WLWLD	Sunday Leeds (A); 10 Jan Leicester (H); 17 Jan Blackburn (A); 1 Feb Newcastle (H)
13	C Palace	19	21	-8	0	3	5	5	14	5	3	3	12	11	LLDLD	Sunday Blackburn (A); 10 Jan Everton (H); 17 Jan Barnsley (A); 31 Jan Leeds (H)
14	Sheff Wed	19	21	-12	5	1	4	18	17	1	2	6	13	26	WWWLL	Sunday Leicester (A); 10 Jan Newcastle (H); 17 Jan Leeds (A); 31 Jan Wimbledon (H)
15	Southampton	19	20	-6	5	1	4	17	14	1	1	7	6	15	LLLWD	Monday Chelsea (H); 10 Jan Bolton (A); 19 Jan Man Utd (H); 31 Jan Arsenal (A)
16	Coventry	19	20	-8	3	6	1	14	10	1	2	6	3	15	LLLWL	Sunday Man Utd (H); 10 Jan Chelsea (A); 17 Jan Arsenal (H); 31 Jan Bolton (A)
17	Bolton	19	20	-13	3	5	1	9	6	1	3	6	8	23	WWLDL	Sunday Everton (A); 10 Jan Southampton (H); 17 Jan Newcastle (A); 31 Jan Coventry (H)
18	Tottenham	19	19	-15	4	2	4	11	14	1	2	6	6	18	LWLLW	Sunday Arsenal (H); 10 Jan Man Utd (A); 17 Jan West Ham (H); 31 Jan Derby (A)
19	Everton	19	17	-10	3	2	4	11	13	1	3	6	6	14	LLDDW	Sunday Bolton (H); 10 Jan Crystal Palace (A); 18 Jan Chelsea (H); 30 Jan West Ham (A)
20	Barnsley	19	14	-33	2	2	5	10	20	2	0	8	7	30	WLLDL	Sunday Derby (H); 10 Jan West Ham (A); 17 Jan Crystal Palace (H); 31 Jan Chelsea (A)

TEAM-BY TEAM GUIDE TO TODAY'S GAMES

Arsenal v Leicester

Last year: 2-0
Bergkamp 12 — Leading scorer — Marshall 7

Arsenal will be without Adams, who is out for a month with a back injury, while midfielder Petit is suspended and striker Wright plays his final game before a two-match ban. Leicester manager Martin O'Neill is set to name an unchanged side. Cottee could be called back from his loan spell at Birmingham.

Derby v Newcastle

Last year: 0-1
Baiano 11 — Leading scorer — Barnes, Asprilla 6

Sturridge returns to the Rams' attack after recovering from a strained hamstring but Danish defender Laursen is still under treatment for a knee injury. Newcastle look certain to be without Albert and skipper Lee. Albert injured his hamstring against Manchester United last week while Lee has been struggling for a month with a calf injury

Aston Villa v Tottenham

Last year: 1-1
Yorke, Taylor 8 — Leading scorer — Ginola 7

Villa will check on the fitness of Southgate, Staunton and Oakes, who were laid low with a virus in the early part of the week. For Spurs, Ferdinand has recovered from a virus which forced him to miss the second-half against Barnsley last Saturday. Klinsmann will not make his Spurs debut second time around at Villa Park as he will be with his family in Genoa.

Liverpool v Leeds

Last year: 4-0
Fowler, Owen 9 — Leading scorer — Wallace 10

Liverpool captain Ince is fighting to be fit after a groin problem kept him out of the last two Premiership matches. Carragher will stand in if he fails a fitness test. Leeds centre back Radebe completes a two-match ban, which provides another chance for Molenaar. Kewell will come into contention if he recovers from a knee injury. Hasselbaink will continue to partner Wallace if Kewell is kept waiting.

Bolton v Barnsley

Last year: 2-2
Blake 9 — Leading scorer — Redfearn 8

Fish, back from S Africa duty, and Taggart, who has recovered from *a groin injury on the back of a six-game ban, are in contention.* Whitlow is on standby to replace Phillips. Holdsworth and Thompson are suspended, and keeper Branagan is hoping to earn a recall despite a groin injury. Barnsley will have a fully-fit squad, with the exception of Davis, and Yugoslav midfielder Bosancic should play.

Man Utd v Everton

Last year: 2-2
Cole 18 — Leading scorer — Speed 8

United boss Alex Ferguson seems certain to stick with the squad that travelled to Newcastle. May is having treatment on a knee injury. For Everton, Williamson could be back after an ankle problem kept him out at Leicester last Saturday. Duncan Ferguson completes his three-match ban while Ebic still has three more games to go. Watson (knee) and Speed (ankle) are doubtful starters.

Chelsea v Wimbledon

Last year: 2-4
Vialli 11 — Leading scorer — Cort 6

Chelsea will be without injured Babayaro and suspended Mark Hughes, but if Morris shakes off flu, manager Ruud Gullit will have *the rest of his squad to choose from. Wimbledon will be without* suspended duo Perry and Ceri Hughes. Strikers Ekoku, Euell and Goodman and defender McAllister are injured.

Sheff Wed v Blackburn

Last year: 1-0
Di Canio 9 — Leading scorer — Sutton 12

Wednesday have skipper Atherton back from suspension but record signing Di Canio starts a two-match ban and fellow Italian Carbone is likely to replace him. Blackburn striker Sutton is available after a one-match ban. Young Irish striker Duff or winger Wilcox will be demoted to the substitutes' bench to make way for Sutton. Hendry faces a late fitness test after a virus.

C Palace v Southampton

Last year: no fixture
Shipperly 5 — Leading scorer — Davies 10

*Palace could welcome back striker Dyer and Shipperley but wing-*back Smith and Italians Lombardo and Padovano are doubtful with injury. Edworthy is suspended. Southampton have Ostenstad, who has not started a game for more than two months, on standby to return in place of Davies who is doubtful because of a thigh *injury. Midfielder Slater is available for the first time in three weeks.*

West Ham v Coventry

Last year: 1-1
Hartson 17 — Leading scorer — Dublin 8

West Ham have received clearance to enable French goalkeeper Lama to join the squad. Australian winger Lazaridis is back-after international duty. Coventry striker Dublin is likely to line up at centre-back again alongside Shaw. Breen, Williams and Burrows are suspended, McAllister and Salako are on the long-term *injury list and now Nilsson (ankle) and Hall (flu) are doubtful.*

CRICKET

Fitzpatrick steers Australia into final

Australia 123-7
India 104-9
Australia won by 19 runs

Australia's women cricketers claimed a place *in the World* Cup final, against either England or *New Zeland, when they* defeated India in New Delhi on Christmas Eve.

It was an impressive victory after the Indians, with a fine spell of bowling, had managed to restrict the three times world champions to a modest 123 for 7 after wining the toss and putting them to bat.

The Australian captain, Belinda Clark, raised a valuable 66-run opening partnership with Joanne Broadbent, with the left-handed Karen Rolton being the other major contributor to the score.

The Indians, who seemed to have total control of the match, *after the Australian innings,* failed to capitalise on their advantage and quickly lost control of the game after four quick run-outs.

Despite Chandrakanta Ahir's valiant 48 runs, India's middle order collapsed in front of the Australian bowling attack and India managed to make only 104 runs losing nine wickets.

The unfortunate run-out of their captain, *Purnima Rau,* when the Indians were on 70, triggered a slump from which her team-mates could not recover.

The Australian pace bowler, Cathryn Fitzpatrick, who took three wickets for 18 runs in seven overs was named woman of the match.

The day's play had started 135 minutes late because of heavy fog and the match was reduced to 32 overs each. However, India, who were unable to bowl their overs in the stipulated time were penalised and lost two overs of their batting allocation.

● Glenn McGrath, the Australian fast bowler, will be given until just before start of play to prove his fitness for the first Test against South Africa which starts in Melbourne today. McGrath, regarded as vital to Australia's hopes of beating the tourists, yesterday underwent the latest in a series of fitness tests this week to assess his recovery from a stomach injury.

RUGBY UNION

Phillips quits as Bridgend face up to humiliation

John Phillips has quit as Bridgend's director of rugby after they were humbled 24-21 by the village side Garndiffaith in the fourth round of the Swalec Cup last Saturday. This humiliating defeat followed closely on crushing Premier Division losses against the league leaders, Swansea, and the champions, Pontypridd.

Derrick King, the Bridgend chairman, said: "Following the exit of Bridgend from the Swalec Cup and in the light of a number of defeats in the National League, John Phillips has tendered his resignation.

"After discussing the matter with Mr Phillips the directors have very reluctantly accepted the resignation and he will be leaving the service of the club immediately."

The team now face two vital matches on successive Saturdays – Ebbw Vale tomorrow followed by Newport – and King said that he believed they were "possibly the two most crucial games in the history of the club".

The coach, Steve Brown, the backs coach, Alan Donovan, and the former Welsh and British Lion full-back JPR Williams will take temporary charge of the team.

"It really is a nightmare – I never thought we would go into the Christmas period with this sort of situation," said King.

Leicester Tigers have been able to select an all-international pack of forwards for today's trip to table-topping Saracens.

The return of the No 8 Eric Miller from Ireland duties makes it possible, with Lewis Moody reverting to the bench for the Allied Dunbar Premiership match.

The stand-off Joel Stransky returns to the Leicester side after his rib injury, with Fiji's Waisale Serevi switching to scrum-half. But the England centre Will Greenwood is ruled out with a shoulder injury and the 23-year-old James Overend *steps in for his first league ap*pearance of the season.

SPORTING DIGEST

Basketball

NBA: Cleveland 99 Dallas 85, Boston 102 Charlotte 96, Chicago 94 LA Clippers 88, San Antonio 91 Indiana 79, Portland 93 Sacramento 82, Minnesota 112 Seattle 103, Golden State 87 Denver 75.

Cricket

The one-day match between Sri Lanka and India in Indore was abandoned after just three overs yesterday because of a dangerous and dry wicket. Sri Lanka has made 17 for 1 before the game was called off.

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP Semi final (New Delhi): *Australia beat India by 19 runs*

AUSTRALIA

*B Clark lbw b Bhatt	31
J Broadbent run out	33
M Jones lbw b Bhatt	5
M Goszki b Bhatt	0
K Rolton not out	23
B Calver c Harikrishnan b Rau	11
O Magno st Jain b David	0
C Mason st Jain b David	0
J Price not out	2
Extras (lb11, nb1, w6)	18
Total (for 7, 32 overs)	123

Fall: 1-66, 2-80, 3-83, 4-88, 5-113, 6-121, 7-121.

Bowling: Margaret 4-0-13-0; Chaudhery 4-2-7-0; Rau 5-1-19-1; David 6-0-21-0; Bhatt 7-0-25-3; Kulkarni 6-0-21-0.

INDIA

†A Jain b Magno	18
A Chopra c Jones b Fitzpatrick	2
C Ahir lbw b Fitzpatrick	48
*P Rau run out	10
S Harikrishnan run out	1
R Margaret run out	1
S Shaw run out	11
P Bhatt b Fitzpatrick	6
P Chaudhery not out	0
D Kulkarni b Mason	0
N David not out	0
Extras (b-1, lb-1, w-5)	7
Total (for 9, 30 overs)	104

Fall: 1-8, 2-34, 3-70, 4-72, 5-75, 6-93, 7-103, 8-104, 9-104.

Bowling: Fitzpatrick 7-1-18-3; Calver 4-1-18-0; Mason 7-1-10-0; Rolton 5-0-22-0; Magno 5-0-22-1; Fahey 2-0-12-0.

The Essex all-rounder Graham Napier produced a superb spell of in-swing bowling to take four wickets in 15 balls and lead England Under-19 to victory by 47 runs over South African Schools in Port Elizabeth on Christmas Eve. Earlier the England captain, Owais Shah, made a classy 67 in a total of 265 for 9.

ENGLAND UNDER-19

G R Napier c M van Wyk b R van Wyk	1
R W T Key c Lumb b Creed	0
P J Franks run out	41
*O A Shah b Petersen	67
G P Swann c Lumb b Rudolph	40
I N Flanagan st M van Wyk b Bodi	24
G R Haywood c Myburgh b Rudolph	0
J C Powell c Lumb b Creed	36
C P Schofield c Lumb b Bodi	27
R J Logan b Bod	2
N J Wilton not out	3
Extras (b1 lb7 w16 nb3)	27
Total (50 overs)	268

Fall: 1-1 2-7 3-77 4-167 5-170 6-171 7-222 8-247 9-249

Bowling: Creed 10-0-57-2, R van Wyk 8-0-44-1; Lumb 8-0-36-0; Bodi 7-0-42-3; Petersen 10-0-39-1; Rudolph 9-0-42-2

SOUTH AFRICA SCHOOLS

J Myburgh lbw b Logan	12
M Lumb run out	30
J Kent lbw b Powell	58
†M van Wyk c Flanagan b Napier	60
G Elliott b Napier	19
*B Tucker b Napier	9
M Creed lbw b Napier	1
J Rudolph c sub b Powell	7
R Petersen b Powell	9
G Bodi b Schofield	3
R van Wyk not out	3
Extras (lb5 w4 nb1)	10
Total (44.5 overs)	221

Fall: 1-27 2-68 3-132 4-181 5-194 6-194 7-201 8-213 9-216.

Bowling: Logan 4-1-28-1; Franks 3-0-22-0; Napier 10-1-43-4; Swann 10-0-45-0; Powell 9-0-46-3; Schofield 8.5-1-32-1.

Umpires: M Gajjar and S Deena

Football

Yugoslavia will face fellow World Cup qualifiers Nigeria in a warm-up match *in May, Branko Bulatovic, the president* of the Yugoslav Football Association, announced yesterday.

Marcelo Salas, the 23-year-old Chilean striker previously linked with a move to Manchester United and rumored to be on his way to Europe in a multi-million pound transfer, will remain in Argentina with River Plate until after the World Cup, according to his agent, Gustavo Mascardi. Salas reportedly favours a move to Italy. Milan and Parma are believed to be among those vying for his signature.

Middlesbrough striker Chris Freestone has joined Second Division Northampton in a £75,000 deal. The 26-year-old *Freestone has spent three weeks on* loan with the Cobblers and scored twice against Swansea last Saturday.

Stoke have signed the 29-year-old former Derby striker Marco Gabbiadini from the Greek side Ethnikos on a month's trial. *He joins the squad for to*day's match against Sheffield United

Olympic Games

Australia largest sporting stadium, the Melbourne Cricket Ground, will host 12 matches of the Olympic Games football tournament in 2000. More than 90,000 fans watched Australia play Iran at the ground last month and the Victorian state premier, Jeff Kennett, said that was a "sealing point" for hosting Olympic matches there. Kennett said he hoped that the Australian team could play the opening match of the series at the MCG. The final will be played in the main Olympic Stadium.

TODAY'S NUMBER

14

The number of days remaining for Scotland football fans to apply to the *Scotland Travel Club for* tickets for next year's *World Cup finals in* France. Fifa have not yet confirmed how many tickets Scotland will be allocated but the SFA say they need to know the travel club's requirements by 9 January at the latest.

TODAY'S FIXTURES

Football

3.0 unless stated

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP
Arsenal v Leicester (12.0)
Aston Villa v Tottenham (5.0)
Bolton v Barnsley (12.0)
Chelsea v Wimbledon (12.0)
Crystal Palace v Southampton (12.0)
Derby v Newcastle
Liverpool v Leeds
Manchester Utd v Everton
Sheffield Wed v Blackburn
West Ham v Coventry (12.0)

NATIONWIDE FOOTBALL LEAGUE
FIRST DIVISION
Charlton v Norwich (12.0)
Crewe v Manchester City
Huddersfield v Middlesbrough
Ipswich v Birmingham
Nottingham Forest v Swindon
Portsmouth v Queen's Park Rangers
Reading v West Bromwich (12.0)
Stockport v Port Vale
Stoke v Sheffield Utd
Sunderland v Bradford City
Tranmere v Bury
Wolves v Oxford Utd

SECOND DIVISION
Bournemouth v Gillingham (12.0)
Brentford v Southend (12.0)
Bristol City v Millwall (12.0)
Burnley v Chesterfield
Carlisle v Blackpool
Luton v Northampton
Plymouth v Fulham
Preston v Oldham
Walsall v Bristol Rovers
Wrexham v Wigan (12.0)
Wycombe v Watford (1.30)
York v Grimsby

THIRD DIVISION
Barnet v Peterborough (12.0)
Brighton v Colchester (1.0)
Cambridge Utd v Leyton Orient (12.0)
Cardiff v Exeter
Darlington v Macclesfield
Doncaster v Mansfield
Hartlepool v Scarborough
Hull v Chester
Lincoln v Rotherham
Rochdale v Shrewsbury
Scunthorpe v Notts County
Torquay v Swansea (12.15)

GM VAUXHALL CONFERENCE
Cheltenham v Yeovil (1.0)
Dover v Welling (12.0)
Gateshead v Halifax (2.0)
Hednesford v Kettering
Hereford v Kidderminster (12.0)
Leek v Telford (pitch inspection 9am)
Morecambe v Southport
Northwich v Stalybridge
Rushden v Stevenage
Slough v Hayes
Woking v Farnborough

DR MARTENS LEAGUE Premier Division: Atherstone v Nuneaton (n.o). Bath City v Merthyr Tydfil, Bromsgrove v Halesowen Town (n.o); Crawley v Hastings, Dorchester v Salisbury: Forest Green Rovers v Gloucester Gresley Rovers v Burton Albion (n.30); Rothwell v King's Lynn (2.30), Stringbourne v Cambridge City; St Leonards Stamcroft v Ashford Worcester v Tamworth (n.30). Midland Division: Bedworth v VS Rugby (n.30); Brackley v Raunds (12.0): Corby v Ilkeston; Hinckley Utd v Sutton Coldfield; Moor Green v Redditch (n.30). Paget Rangers v Solihull Borough (n.30); Racing Club Warwick v Evesham; Shepshed Dynamo v Blakenall (12.0); Stourbridge v Bilston (n.30); Wisbech v Grantham (n.30). Southern Division: Baldock v Chelmsford; Bashley v Weymouth; Clevedon v Weston-super-Mare (n.o); Dartford v Erith & Belvedere (12.0); Fisher Athletic v Fleet; Newport (Gwent) v Cinderford (12.0); Newport (IoW) v Fareham (n.o); Tonbridge v Margate (n.30); Waterlooville v Havant (12.0); Witney v Cirencester; Yate v Trowbridge.

UNIBOND LEAGUE Premier Division: Gainsborough Trinity v Boston Utd; Marine v Winsford; Radcliffe Borough v Hyde Utd. First Division: Congleton v Witton Albion; Matlock v Buxton.

ARNOTT INSURANCE NORTHERN LEAGUE First Division (n.o): Bedlington v Morpeth; Billingham Town v Billingham Synthonia; Northallerton v Guisborough; South Shields v Jarrow.

INTERLINK EXPRESS MIDLAND ALLIANCE (n.o): Bridgnorth v Shifnal; Chasetown v Pelsall: Halesowen Harriers v Oldbury: King's Norton v Boldmere St Michaels; Knypersley v Rocester; Pershore v Stratford; Rushall v Bloxwich; Sandwell v West Midlands Police; Stapenhill v Barwell; Wednesfield v Willenhall.

UHLSPORT UNITED COUNTIES LEAGUE Premier Division: Eynesbury v St Neots (n.o); Stamford v Mirrlees Blackstone.

UNIJET SUSSEX COUNTY LEAGUE First Division: Arundel v Littlehampton (n.o); Burgess Hill v Hassocks (n.o); Pagham v Selsey (12.0).

WINSTONLEAD KENT LEAGUE First Division: Hythe v Folkestone Invicta (n.15).

SCREWFIX DIRECT LEAGUE Premier Division: Bideford v Barnstaple.

JEWSON WESSEX LEAGUE: Aerostructures v Eastleigh (n.o); Bournemouth FC v Wimborne (n.o); Newbury v Thatcham (3.0); Romsey v Christchurch (12.0); Totton v BAT Sports (12.0).

JEWSON EASTERN LEAGUE Premier Division (n.o): Clacton v Harwich & Parkeston: Fakenham v Watton, Great Yarmouth v Gorleston; Tiptree v Halstead.

SMIRNOFF IRISH LEAGUE Premier Division: Ballymena v Coleraine; Cliftonville v Crusaders; Glentoran v Linfield: Portadown v Glenavon. First Division: Carrick Rangers v Bangor.

LEAGUE OF WALES: Aberystwyth v Rhayader (2.30); Caernarfon v Porthmadog; Caersws v Newtown (2.30); Cemaes Ynys Mon v Bangor City (2.30); Flint v Connah's Quay (n.o); Haverfordwest v Ebbw Vale (2.30); Rhyl v Conwy (2.30); Welshpool v TNS Llansantffraid (2.30).

HARP NATIONAL LEAGUE OF IRELAND Premier Division: Bohemians v Derry City (3.15).

Rugby Union

ALLIED DUNBAR PREMIERSHIP One: Saracens v Leicester (3.0).

CLUB MATCH: West Hartlepool v Hartlepool Rovers (2.0).

Rugby League

FRIENDLY MATCHES: Featherstone Rovers v Wakefield Trinity (11.30); Leeds v Halifax (11.30); Wigan v St Helens (3.0).

Ice hockey

EXPRESS CUP: Sheffield Steelers v Nottingham Panthers (7.30).

Basketball

BUDWEISER LEAGUE: Leicester v London Leopards (3.0).2\

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AROUND THE RESORTS

Resort	Comment	Area open	Last snow	Low cm	Upper cm	Weather
ANDORRA						
Soldeu	Adequate cover at all levels	80%	21 12	35	75	Cloudy
AUSTRIA						
Kitzbuhel	Restricted to upper areas	80%	21 12	0	65	Cloudy sun
BULGARIA						
Borovets	Reasonable at high runs only	90%	19 12	20	40	Cloudy
CANADA						
Whistler	Packed powder snow	90%	18 12	80	170	Snow
FRANCE						
Les Arcs	Much improved conditions	80%	21 12	30	215	Snow
Val d'Isère	Espace Killy slopes now open	50%	21 12	45	90	Unsettled
ITALY						
Bardonecchia	Superb from top to bottom	100%	19 12	50	120	Some cloud
Cortina	Good cover on high pistes	90%	21 12	30	110	Light snow
NORWAY						
Geilo	Packed powder	70%	24 12	35	40	Snow
SPAIN						
Sierra Nevada	Up to 61km of skiable pistes	85%	20 12	30	150	Sunny
SWITZERLAND						
Grindelwald	Powdery snow at upper levels	75%	21 12	30	75	Brighter
Klosters	Powdery snow on upper slopes	100%	22 12	25	40	Snowy
UNITED STATES						
Aspen	Mainly packed powder	90%	16 12	50	5	Snow

Snow Reports supplied by Newstel

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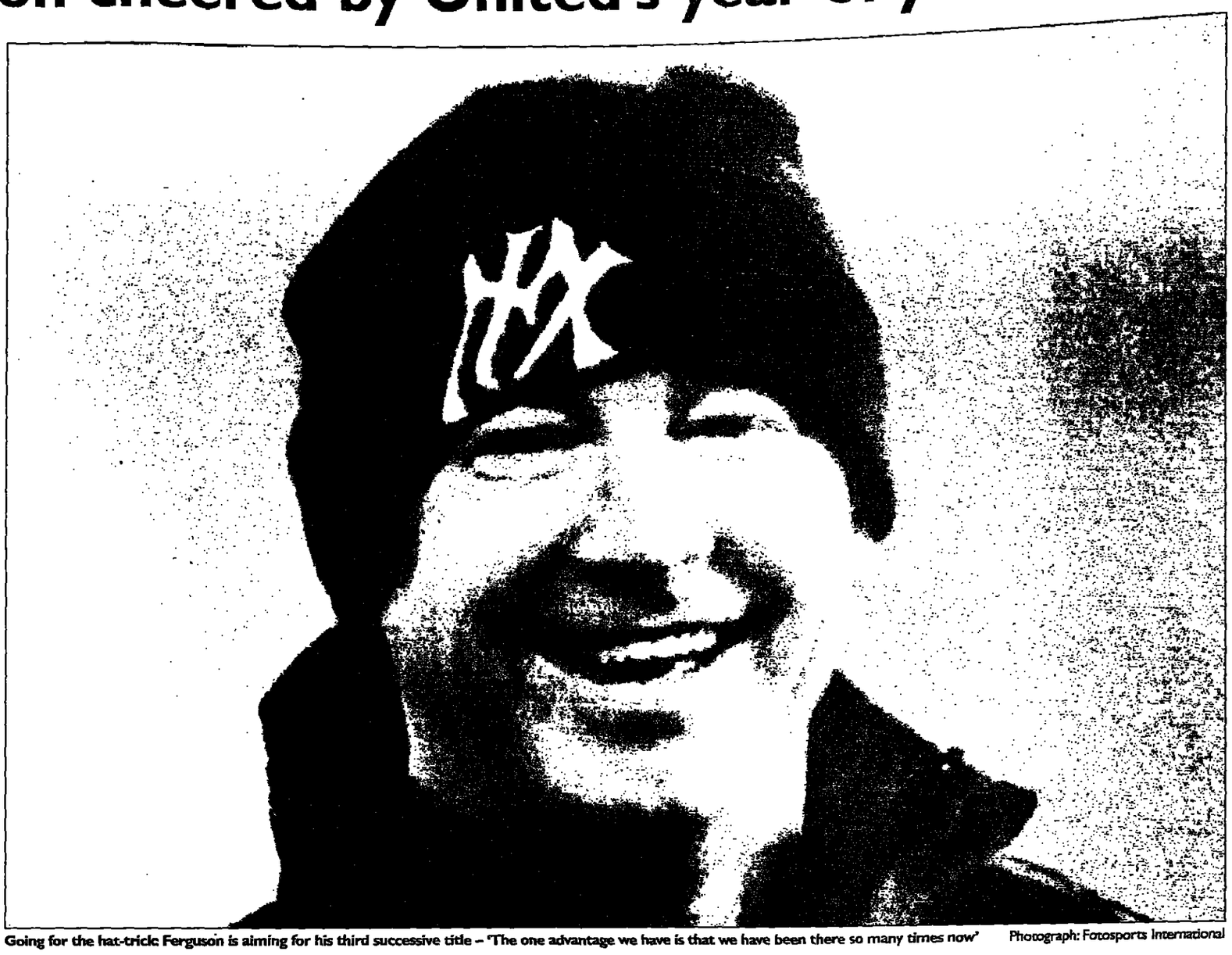
Ferguson cheered by United's year of youthful maturity

Manchester United's players were full of the Christmas spirit yesterday – but not in the alcoholic sense. Points not pints are the priority at Old Trafford these days.

As he watched his team prepare for the rigours of the coming months, Alex Ferguson talked to *Glenn Moore* about the past year's success – and of his ambition to field a team of teetollers.



Going for the hat-trick: Ferguson is aiming for his third successive title – 'The one advantage we have is that we have been there so many times now' Photograph: Fotosports International

Manchester United's benevolent dictator looked out of his office window yesterday morning and chuckled. This was not because of a sadistic delight at having dragged his players away from their families to train in the rain on Christmas Day morning, but out of pleasure at their reaction.

"The young ones are beating the old buggers," he said barely suppressing his mirth. "They are all dancing about because usually the old boys beat them."

No signs of pressure at the champions then, and no wonder after the year they have had. Discounting the Coca-Cola Cup (as United do) they go into today's match with Everton at Old Trafford having lost just eight games, and won 31, out of 50 played. Not bad for a year's work even if two of the defeats, home and away to Borussia Dortmund, still hurt.

"Would I have settled for the year we've had last January? Oh yes," said Ferguson. "We won the title and that's always the be-all and end-all for me. It would have been a bonus if we had got to the European Cup final but we had the experience of getting to the semi-final.

"The highlight for me, apart from winning the League, is the maturity of the young players and the team as a whole, and the way [Teddy] Sheringham fitted in. He has the vision you need in big games. With players like [Paul] Scholes and him, [Ryan] Giggs and [David] Beckham, you look forward to matches.

"Teddy has combined very, very well with Andy Cole. He is an unselfish player. He will lay a pass on even if he has a chance of scoring, like [Eric] Cantona would. He works really hard for us. Some players get a chance late in their career, like Tony Book at Manchester City, and Teddy, coming to us at 31, has absolutely grasped it.

"It took him a while to get used to it. The games come thick and fast at the start of the season and every game is a cup tie for us. Henning Berg was the same, he hit a plateau. That happens, Cantona did that when he came. If they are good enough, they come again."

Another player worthy of special mention in United's year is Peter Schmeichel, his excellence is often taken for granted until highlighted by performances like that at Newcastle last Sunday. "He's magnificent," said Ferguson. "His last save at Newcastle was even better than those he made there two years ago. He's not dropped his level at all. He's still ambitious and that's important."

One match stands out. The 3-2 victory over Juventus on 1 October. "That opened the door this season. We never start the season that well and this time was no different, but that performance brought the team on to another level. The performance against Kosice had been economical, careful and patient, but there was no acceleration. Against Juventus they were magnificent.

"The wins at Anfield were also major results because the games against Liverpool are massive now. It may change, but in my time here the derby matches against City don't assume the proportions of Liverpool games."

The worst match is no surprise. It's Europe again and the tie with Dortmund. "That semi-final was a killer, no doubt. It was not that we played badly but we let ourselves down with the finishing. I keep thinking about the chances we had time and time again...the Germans are lucky bastards," he added, tongue only half in cheek.

Roy Keane's injury was another low point. "Not so much for us as for the lad's career," said Ferguson with customary paternalism. "To me he is the best all-round player in Britain. But we won't rush him. He will be given the full remedial rehabilitation before he comes back. The operation was a complete success. He's looking terrific, he's getting itchy feet now but that's not a problem for me to slow that down. I'll be happy just to have him back in August.

"The strange thing is it solved a problem for me. It was becoming a real headache getting Scholes in the team: he had come on in leaps and bounds. You would not want it to happen that way but Keane's injury solved it as he and [Nicky] Butt have fitted in perfectly together."

United were doing light training yesterday "to maintain the momentum" and keep the players loose in the limb. Once they would have brought their players in on Christmas Day just to ensure they did not overdo it on Christmas Eve.

That is not so much the case now. There are still a couple of enthusiastic imbibers at Old Trafford but there, and elsewhere in the Premiership, the numbers are declining. This, believes Ferguson, is a consequence of the foreign influx.

"I think there was a lot of scepticism when these players arrived, but there is a realisation that they have benefited the game. The way they prepare is an example, they look after themselves. They don't drink."

There is a theory, still popular at some clubs, that a night on the tiles together fosters team spirit, but it is not one that United, whose team ethic is outstanding, appear to subscribe to. "I've always been against players drinking, and I'm always thinking of ways of getting a team that doesn't drink," Ferguson said. "Eventually that will happen. It may not be in my time but it will happen. I've got about seven players who don't drink at all in this squad. If you drink it affects your fitness."

A Christmas wish? "I wish linesmen would get it right. I don't think they understand the offside law well enough or read the game well enough. I know it's hard with the pace of the game but too often a player is called offside and they're not. They should give the attacker the benefit. Linesmen should be brought to book. They are part of the entertainment industry."

Among Ferguson's Christmas presents were a pair of binoculars from his wife, Cathy. They are for when he goes horse racing but many will feel they may be more useful to United's challengers so they can keep track of them as, with their traditional New Year surge, they disappear over the horizon. Needless to say, Ferguson does not agree.

"No way, it is a hard league to win. There are a lot of games coming up. We may get involved in the FA Cup and will hopefully go to the death in Europe. That's a major season which stretches the capacity and endurance of your players. The continual demands means they will make mistakes, everyone will in that situation, so we're going to lose a game or two, or three."

United lost twice in the second half of last season yet still came from five points behind Liverpool at this stage last year, and Ferguson insisted: "So it's impossible to suggest that the league can be won in December or January. Someone may go on a run and get confident, Chelsea are looking strong at the moment, you can expect Arsenal and Liverpool to go on some sort of a run, and Newcastle.

"The one advantage we have is that we have been there so many times now. Ryan Giggs is 24 and he has four championship medals and could have six. There is a psychological factor to losing, especially in March or April and players like him can put a result in perspective."

So, increasingly these days, is the public view of Ferguson. The Angry Fergie image is being tempered by respect. "I think it is changing. People were writing about me before they knew me. They see me watching a game and say I'm dour. There is no perception of you as a person. I may be wiser, more experienced and I've mellowed in terms of my temper but I'm no different to how I was 25 years ago."

Even so, it is hard to imagine even the mellow Ferguson dressing up in a Santa Claus suit for a tabloid as one of his predecessors did this week. Anything Everton get from his team at Old Trafford today will have to be earned.

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE PREVIEW

Robson seeking inspiration from the fans

The Middlesbrough manager Bryan Robson is looking to the club's fans as his team aim to rebound from last weekend's defeat at Manchester City.

The Nationwide League First Division leaders visit Huddersfield today, and Robson said: "The fans have been a terrific help with their overwhelming support.

"It's vital we bounce back from our defeat at Maine Road when we go to Huddersfield. We didn't compete in the opening 20 minutes last Saturday and paid the penalty. We must be fully-committed from the start against Huddersfield as they have shown improved form recently. There will be a sell-out crowd and I hope my players will get back to winning ways."

The Huddersfield midfield player Paul Dalton will hope to add a victory over Boro to his list of Christmas presents after signing a new two-and-a-half year extension to his current contract. His manager, Peter Jackson, said: "Paul has the ability to carry this club into the millennium.

"I firmly believe that judging by the talent he's shown since I arrived here, he has wasted his career so far. He's been fantastic and deserves his new contract. But it's vital he makes the most of the next few years both for the club and himself."

Denis Smith, who was confirmed as the new West Bromwich Albion manager on Christmas Eve, is in charge of his new side for the first time for today's visit to Reading. The former Oxford United manager is Albion's third manager in 12 months, but said: "I've signed a three-year contract and it is my intention to stay with Albion for this period.

"If Albion do as well in the second half of the season as they have in the first I will be delighted – we will be pushing for promotion. I've had only one season as a manager in the Premier League and I would like to take Albion into the top division."

Smith has agreed to work with Albion's current coaches John Trewick and Cyrille Regis. "I will have to rely upon their judgement for the first few games until I get to know the players," he said.

The Sunderland manager, Peter Reid, is confident his side will extend their unbeaten 12-match run, including four successive wins, to keep in touch with Middlesbrough. Sunderland play Bradford today, and Reid said: "We're on a roll and my lads are extremely confident. Promotion is not over by a long way – we'll definitely go close."

NON-LEAGUE NOTEBOOK

Harriers desperate for some local cheer

In the world of non-League football, Boxing Day is derby day. While the peculiarities of the Football League fixture computer and police restrictions mean that some Nationwide clubs have to make ludicrous journeys today (Birmingham to Ipswich, Fulham to Plymouth), there is no such nonsense in the semi-professional game. Throughout the country local rivals will do battle with little sign of goodwill towards neighbours.

Last season the biggest Boxing Day non-League crowd was at Aggborough, where 6,081 fans watched Bromsgrove Rovers beat Kidderminster Harriers. Rovers' relegation from the GM Vauxhall Conference has put an end to that Worcestershire derby, so Harriers will face a different foe at noon today.

Kidderminster make the short trip to Edgar Street to renew their rivalry with Hereford United. Harriers began 1997 15 points clear at the top of the Conference, and they still feel aggrieved that it was Macclesfield and not them who replaced Hereford in the League. This term their form has been poor – only five clubs are beneath them in the table – and they are desperate for a win today to revive their fortunes.

"It's a tough game," Graham Allner, Harriers' manager, said, "but Hereford can't be happy with their home form. If we work hard our fortunes should improve. The signs are there that we're turning things round." The sides meet again at Aggborough on New Year's Day.

Elsewhere in the Conference, Stalybridge Celtic's new managerial team, Mel Sterland and Imre Varadi, face a Cheshire derby at Northwich Victoria today for their first game in charge, while Morecambe against Southport will draw a big crowd to the Lancashire coast.

In the Dr Martens League Bromsgrove entertain Halesowen Town this morning, while Nuneaton go to Atherstone and Burton Albion make the short journey to Gresley Rovers.

Local passions will be just as stirred in the lower leagues. On Teesside, Billingham Town take on Billingham Synthonia this morning, while tomorrow Sudbury Town play host to Sudbury Wanderers in Suffolk and, at noon in Somerset, Street have a league game against their neighbours, Glastonbury, for the first time since the 1954-55 season.

- Rupert Metcalf

SCOTTISH PREVIEW

Jackson ready to complete his remarkable recovery

Darren Jackson, the Scotland striker, returns to McDiarmid Park tomorrow – a ground that is etched in his memory. It was there in August he made his final League appearance for Celtic before he was told he needed brain surgery.

Jackson, who scored in that 2-0 victory against St Johnstone, then became ill with a violent headache in the run-up to the Uefa Cup match against Tirol 72 hours later. However, he has made a remarkable recovery and is back in the first-team squad, more than grateful to be wearing the green and white.

"It is incredible when you think about the chain of events since that match against St Johnstone," he said. "We won the match at McDiarmid Park well with two good goals from Henrik [Larsson] and me. But three days later I was in hospital facing brain surgery. You can't get much more of a contrast.

"Thankfully things went well and here I am playing again which is brilliant. A lot of people have said I am ahead of schedule but I feel fine and I am really enjoying just being part of things again."

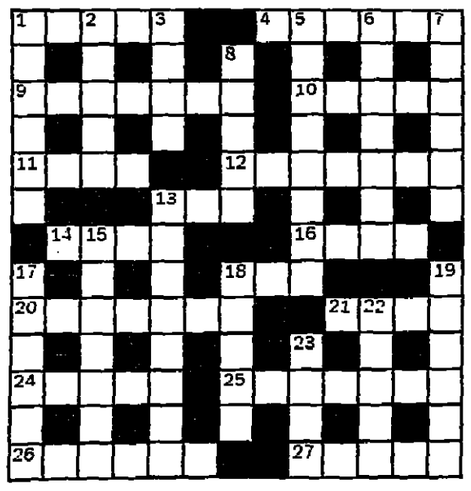
The leaders, Rangers, face the one team who have beaten them in the league this season, Dundee United, who were 2-1 winners at Tannadice in October. While the champions will be favourites, Rangers' only domestic home defeat also came against United, a 1-0 Coca-Cola Cup quarter-final loss.

- Ken Gaunt

GAMES

CONCISE CROSSWORD

No.3491 Friday 26 December



ACROSS

1 Map (5)
4 Awaken from sleep (6)
9 Wash hair (7)
10 Larceny (5)
11 Requirement (4)
12 Small marsupial (7)
13 Attention (3)
14 Communist theoretician (4)
16 Clever (4)
18 Hair styling aid (3)
20 Ruler (7)
21 Frank (4)
24 Breed of dog (5)
25 Dramatic scene (7)
26 Tarry (6)
27 Female undergarment (5)

DOWN

1 Gambling establishment (6)
2 Conscious (5)
3 Variety (4)
5 Logical (8)
6 Implement (7)
7 Bury (6)
8 Benefactor (5)
13 Put into use (8)
15 Pain-killer (7)
17 Drawing instrument (6)
18 Jar (5)
19 Excessively (6)
22 Implore (5)
23 Aid (4)

Solution to Wednesday's Concise Crossword:

ACROSS: 7 Taxied, 8 Answer (Taxi-dancer), 10 Tel Aviv, 11 Earls, 12 Lady, 13 Pride, 17 Globe, 18 Barn, 22 Bulge, 23 Darling, 24 Amused, 25 Acacia. DOWN: 1 Stately, 2 Exclude, 3 Heavy, 4 Unready, 5 Swarm, 6 Fresh, 9 Everybody, 14 Sleeper, 15 Tapioca, 16 Anagram, 19 U-boat, 20 Flour, 21 Trace.

BRIDGE OR CHESS

North-South game; dealer East

North
♠Q 8 7 6
♡K J 8 3
♢7 4
♣K J 5

West
♠K J 2
♡10 9 6 5 4
♢A 6 2
♣7 4

East
♠A 3
♡A
♢Q J 10 9 5
♣10 9 8 6 3

South
♠10 9 5 4
♡Q 7 2
♢K 8 3
♣A Q 2

"To protect or not to protect," as the Bard might have said. East opened 1♢. South passed, and West bid 1♡. East rebid 2♠. West bid 2♢, which was followed by two passes. It was a pairs event, and now South wondered if he was being talked out of something. Nobody had bid spades or suggested No-trumps, so there seemed a fair chance that his partner (a) held some spades and (b) was not bereft of values.

South decided to protect with 2♠ – not a success, for West began with a small double, and the defence was merciless. West led ♣7 and, after winning in hand declarer made the ill-judged play of a small trump to dummy's queen. East took his ace and cashed the ♡A to which West followed with the ten, a clear McKenney for a diamond return, also making it clear that he was not now angling for a club ruff. East dutifully switched to the ♢10 and was allowed to hold the trick. South ducked the ♢J which followed, but West was on target when he overtook with the ♢A and gave partner the heart ruff. Two trump tricks later, South was ruefully writing "minus 500" on his score sheet.

DAILY CHOICE

Show: Chicks with Flicks, King's Head, London N1 (0171-226 1916) 7pm & 9pm

"My head is in a spin, my feet don't touch the ground When you are near to me my head goes round and round..." If you were around in the Seventies, you cannot fail to recognise the lyrics to Kelly-Marie's sensational one-hit wonder "It Feels Like I'm in Love". In her near legendary wardrobe, Kelly-Marie did for the zip-up space suit what Audrey Hepburn did for the little black cocktail number. According to famed trichologist and vocalist Jackie Clune, she also had "the bastardised brush-out flick". Clune's exacting examination of the tresses and stresses of Seventies sirens, an all-singing brush with hair- and song-stylists, is in the running for the year's most ridiculously enjoyable show. Social historians should book immediately, not to mention anyone who wants to know the true story behind the Nolan Sisters and their little-known involvement in the poll tax riots.

David Benedict

هكذا من الاجل

23/TELEVISION & RADIO

TODAY'S PICK

The Hunt (9pm BBC2) With the current debate about fox-hunting generating more heat than light, this fine, dispassionate documentary *from the Under the Sun* strand is a breath of fresh air. Nick Coppen spent one season with the Ludlow Hunt, one of the 200 or so in Britain. His film captures the daily hard work of organisation, as well as the beauty of the horses and hounds in full flight. Close up and it's less pretty, of course. Coppen doesn't shy away from the more distressing images – a retired hound being shot (*after a lifetime of pulling foxes to* bits, they can't be kept as pets), farm animals being skinned (a secondary, money-raising role for the hunt), as well as the fate of the fox, the majority of which go to earth – finished off by spade, terrier and revolver.

Before They Were Famous II (9.40pm BBC1) Enjoyable sequel to Angus Deayton's trawl of pre-stardom footage. *Highlights this time include a* young Tony Blair losing his deposit, Slade as a *bizarre bovver-boy* folk combo, *Casualty*'s Charlie as a teenage pop star, Jonathan Ross in a Rice Krispies advert, and, best of all, Martin Clunes as a very Eddie Izzardish *Dr Who* villain.

Clark Gable in Gone with the Wind: 7.10pm C5

THE FILM

Gone with the Wind (7.10pm C5) "Frankly my dear..." *Go on, lip-sync your way* through what is probably the most popular movie of all time, as legendary for its making as for what ended up on the screen. David O Selznick's production of Margaret Mitchell's Civil War epic, starring Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable, came with a *long list of victims* – notably director George Cukor, who was replaced by Victor Fleming (who in turn had a nervous breakdown). Fleming's sequences may be more prosaic than Cukor's, but at least he got the damned thing finished.

BBC1

6.30 Children's BBC: The Greedysaurus Gang *(R) (S) (8564607)*. **6.35** William's Wish Wellingtons *(R) (S) (8563978)*. **6.40** Bump's Christmas Story *(R) (S) (2749201)*. **6.50** Spol's Magical Christmas (R) (S) *(6021065)*. **7.20** Poddington Peas *(R) (S) (2900171)*. **7.25** Toy Symphony *(R) (S) (2966152)*. **7.50** White Christmas *(R) (6745317)*. **8.15** Eek the Cat *(S) (9626539)*. **8.40** Sweet Valley High *(R) (8906607)*. **9.00** North and South – *on Tour (S) (1769626)*. **9.25** Casper Classics *(R) (6580220)*. **9.40** Teletubbies (S) (9833591).

10.10 Film **Superman III** (Richard Lester 1983 US). Christopher Reeve has to deal with Robert Vaughan's plans for world domination in the heavily jokey second sequel. Richard Pryor livens matters up considerably as the computer boffin arm-twisted into Vaughan's nefarious schemings – coming up with a digitally-generated formula for kryptonite *(70602607)*.

12.10 Paul McCartney's Standing Stone: the Documentary. Follows the creation of Macca's new symphonic work through its first performance at the Royal Albert Hall *(S) (7398571)*.

1.00 News; Weather; Local News *(T)* (50052688). **1.10** Neighbours *(S) (T) (73112775)*.

1.30 Disneytime. Keith Chegwin and Jayne Middlemiss present the cartoon clips (S) (T) *(4912355)*.

2.10 Film **Hook** (Steven Spielberg 1991 US). Hollywood's perennial man-child Steven Spielberg would seem to have been a natural for updating the JM Barrie classic, *Peter Pan*, but Robin Williams, as Peter, and Dustin Hoffman (as Captain Hook) give curiously flat performances. The screenplay gets lost in New Ageisms and the direction gets lost in the expensive – and, let's not be mean – impressive sets. It's all about corporate workaholic Williams getting back in touch with his inner child *(47978572)*.

4.25 The Pink Panther *(R)* (3815881). **4.50** Final Score *(S) (6346317)*. **5.10** News; Weather; Local News *(5733715)*. **5.25** Neighbours *(6822442)*.

5.50 Big Break. Snooker game show takes a panto theme with Jim Davidson as Peter Pan and *guest star Wendy Richard as Tinkerbell. In their dreams... (S) (T) (544404).*

6.20 Film **Beethoven's 2nd** (Rod Daniel 1993 US). Or, this time there are puppies. Soppily *enjoyable St Bernard sequel, with Charles* Grodin competing with the shaggy mutt for audience sympathy *(S) (1476442)*.

7.40 EastEnders. Tiffany pushes Grant too far. *(S) (T) (312713)*.

8.10 Blankety Blank. Lily Savage takes over the *moth-eaten game show. (S) (516862)*.

8.40 News; Weather *(T) (780510)*.

9.00 The Vicar of Dibley. *Christmas special for* Dawn French's female vicar, with Alice and Hugo's relationship to the fore *(S) (T) (933133)*.

9.40 Before They Were Famous II. See *Today's Pick*, above *(S) (T) (203930)*.

10.15 Film **True Lies** (James Cameron 1994 US). Arnold Schwarzenegger *is a secret agent so* hush-hush that even his wife (Jamie Lee Curtis) *doesn't know what he does in this casually* racist and misogynist (check out the scene where Arnie interrogates his wife) James Bond pastiche. Big bangs. Big yuck (36537317).

12.35 Unplugged – Oasis. Liam *had a cold*, so Noel went solo in this acoustic set of the boys' greatest hits *(R) (S) (T) (4989878)*.

1.20 Film **Carry On Girls** (Gerald Thomas 1973 UK). Businessman Sid James infuriates *local* feminists (led by an unlikely Joan Sims) by a *staging a beauty contest*. No Kenneth Williams or Charles Hawtrey in this one, alas (Followed by Weather) *(7827783)*. *To 2.45am.*

BBC2

7.15 The Phil Silvers Show *(R) (2968510)*.

7.40 Film ***Gold Diggers of 1933*** (Mervyn LeRoy 1933 US) Funny, good-natured backstage mu*sical and Depression period piece, with Ginger* Rogers singing "We're in the Money", and Dick Powell, *Ruby Keeler, Joan Blondell and 60 chorus* girls (at one stage wired up with lights) *choreographed by Busby Berkeley (18214688)*.

9.15 Film **Oliver Twist** (David Lean 1948 UK). With a terrifying Robert Newton as Bill Sikes, Alec Guinness as a controversial Fagin (his *portrayal caused trouble with Jewish groups in* America, and the film's release there was delayed several years) and Kay Walsh as Nancy – this often suffers unfairly in comparison with Lean's *Great Expectations*. Expressionistically designed and lit, and with a real sense of decay and evil *(76554065)*.

11.05 Film **Thoroughly Modern Millie** (George Roy Hill 1967 US). Frenetic, over-busy musical spoof, set in the 1920s, with Julie Andrews as the fortune-hunting flapper. With Mary Tyler Moore, Beatrice Lillie and James Fox *(47151030)*.

1.20 Christmas in Vienna. Placido Domingo and Sarah Brightman lead the festivities in the Austrian capital *(S) (2936775)*.

2.20 Everything to Play For. Goes to Russia to uncover the origins of Shostakovich's Leningrad Symphony *(S) (45676336)*.

2.50 Salome. Catherine Malfitano takes the title role in Luc Bondy's production of Richard Strauss's opera, recorded at the Royal Opera House *(S) (97531152)*.

4.45 Film **Far Country** (Anthony Mann 1955 US). James Stewart takes his herd of cattle to Alaska in this handsomely photographed yarn – one of director Anthony Mann's series of acclaimed westerns which helped revitalise the genre in the 1950s *(T) (14058249)*.

6.20 Land of the Tiger. In the last of the series, Valmik Thapar travels to the rainforests of Assam, Southern India's Western Ghats, and across the seas to Sri Lanka *(S) (T) (304510)*.

7.10 A Christmas Dickens. Simon Callow reads *Mrs Limper's Lodgings*, which, apparently, was as popular in Dickens's time as *A Christmas Carol (S) (T) (939775)*.

7.45 The Royal Ballet. A double bill of performances by the Royal Ballet, recorded in July *shortly before the closure of the Royal Opera* House. The company performs George Balanchine's *Symphony in C* and William Forsythe's *Steptext (S) (725065)*.

9.00 Under the Sun: The Hunt. *See Today's Pick*, above *(S) (7929404)*.

10.10 Steptoe and Son Christmas Special. Seasonal episode from 1974. Harold plans a *Christmas in Majorca (R) (T) (838775)*.

10.55 Stella Street. More from John Sessions, Phil *Cornwell and Peter Richardson's enjoyably silly* spoof in which movie stars like Jack Nicholson *and Michael Caine live in Surbiton (S) (338133)*.

11.05 Film **The Browning Version** (Mike Figgis *1994 UK). Albert Finney gives a performance of* considerable pathos as Terrence Rattigan's *about-to-retire schoolmaster, re-evaluating his* life as his wife (Greta Scacchi – an unlikely *spouse for a dusty teacher, it must be said)* carries on with chemistry master Matthew Modine, and he is asked not to make a speech on Speech Day. Also with Julian Sands and *Michael Gambon (S) (611423)*.

12.35 Film **The Amazing Colossal Man** (Bert I Gordon 1957 US). An army officer exposed to atomic blast grows into a giant and attacks Las Vegas (Then *Weatherview*) *(3902485) To 2.00am*

ITV

6.00 GMTV *(2254084)*. **9.25** The Treasure Seekers *(R) (S) (T) (1757881)*.

9.55 Children's ITV: Tiny Toon Adventures (S) *(1248591)*. **10.20** Percy the Park Keeper (S) *(7598688)*.

10.50 Film **Freaky Friday** (Melanie Mayron 1995 US). Shelley Long swaps bodies with her teenage daughter for the day – all courtesy of the sort magic talisman that this feeble remake could have done with *(S) (T) (56604341)*.

12.30 Countdown to Tomorrow *(S) (4305997)*. **1.20** News Headlines; Weather *(T) (33435930)*.

1.30 Film ***Batman: Mask of the Phantasm*** (Eric Radomski 1993 US) Animated Batman from the *Dark Knight* series – the gloomy 1980s comic books credited with "saving" the caped crusader *from the legacy of 1960s camp (S) (T) (9951268)*.

2.40 Film **The Sword in the Stone** (Wolfgang Reitherman 1963 US). TH White's magical Arthurian story *(S) (T) (1187249)*.

4.10 The Canterville Ghost. *Ian Richardson leads* in this lavish version of Oscar Wilde's comic ghost story *about an American family who move* into a haunted English castle *(S) (T) (9741602)*

5.40 News; Weather *(T) (194648)*.

5.50 Emmerdale *(S) (T) (539572)*.

6.20 Film **Forever Young** (Steve Miner 1992 US) A 1930s test pilot has his body cryogenically *frozen by ahead-of-his-time boffin buddy* George Wendt, and then wakes up in 1992. Jamie Lee Curtis is the modern gal who helps out. Fun, up to a point *(S) (T) (70108688)*.

8.20 Coronation Street. *Kevin has a shock for Natalie (T) (531171).*

8.50 News; Weekend Weather. *(T) (221442)*.

9.00 Dame Edna Kisses It Better. Elle Macpherson, *Cliff Richard, David Seaman, Rolf Harris,* Melinda Messenger and Lord Archer look a ripe *bunch of guest victims (S) (T) (1317)*.

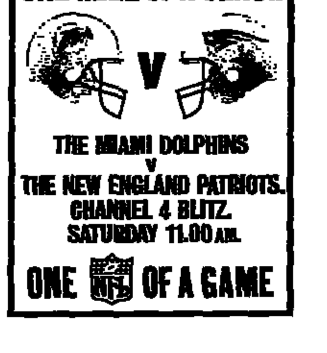
10.00 Film **Dances with Wolves** (Kevin Costner *1990 US). Simplistic, hugely self-confident* western epic, mocked for its Sioux subtitles and *barely competent script and direction, but which* cleaned up at the box office and at the Oscars. *Costner is the disillusioned Civil War soldier who* goes native American – the support boasts the *likes of Floyd Red Crow Westerman and Nathan* Lee Chasing His Horse *(S) (T) (3590881)*.

1.20 Box Office America *(4113263)*.

1.50 Baywatch *(R) (406911)*.

3.35 Film **Please Turn Over** (Gerald Thomas 1960 UK). A teenage girl writes an embarrassing *roman a clef* peopled by relatives and neighbours in this gentle farce helmed by *Carry On* director Thomas. With Leslie Phillips, Joan Sims, Charles Hawtrey and Lionel Jeffries *(8700553)*.

5.05 Collins and Maconie's Movie Club *(R) (S) (3455027)*. **5.30 Children's ITV:** Talespin (S) *(6083553)* **5.55** News *(82436992)*. *To 6.00am.*



ONE HELL OF A CLASH
V
THE MIAMI DOLPHINS
V
THE NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS.
CHANNEL 4 BLITZ.
SATURDAY 11.00AM.
ONE OF A GAME

CHANNEL4

6.10 Ovide *(R) (S) (4386959)* **6.35** Madeline *(R) (6002930)*. **7.00** The Babysitters' Club *(R) (9018862)*. **7.35** Two Stupid Dogs *(R) (S) (8323626)*. **8.00** The Big Breakfast *(17688)*. **10.00** Zig and Zag's Big Morning: Happy Days *(R) (10775)*. **10.30** Zig and Zag's Big Morning: Morning Line *(S) (9689572)*.

11.15 Film **Jack the Giant Killer** (Nathan Juran 1961 US). Children's fantasy adventure, set in "Ancient England", about a giant who is sent to kidnap a king's daughter. With Kerwin Mathews, Judi Meredith and Torin Thatcher – and, no, I haven't heard of any of them either *(T) (23501930)*.

1.00 Channel 4 Racing from Kempton Park and Leopardstown. Including the 1.10, 1.45, 2.20 (otherwise known as the King George VI Chase) and 2.55 races *(S) (45719404)*.

3.15 Film **The Land that Time Forgot** (Kevin Connor 1975 US). The special effects are a tad ropey, but otherwise this is an entertaining screen version of Edgar Rice Burroughs' 1918 sci-fi yarn about the survivors from a British ship sunk by a German submarine washing up on a South American island replete with dinosaurs and the like *(T) (42821125)*.

4.55 Bewitched *(T) (2598274)*.

5.25 Light Lunch Cardigan Christmas. Vic Reeves, Bob Mortimer and Ulrika Jonsson are Mel and Sue's late lunch guests *(4530442)*.

6.30 Brookside. Ninety-minute special during which Jimmy must come to terms with the fact that his daughter is involved with Barry Grant *(S) (T) (95272997)*.

8.05 Film **Midsummer Night's Dream** (Adrian Noble 1996 UK). Filmed theatre, really, and not too smart with it, this is Adrian Noble's RSC production with Lindsay Duncan and Alex Jennings leading the cast *(62318539)*.

10.00 Film **Nell** (Michael Apted 1994 US). Jodie Foster gets to show off her range in this variant on Francois Truffaut's *L'Enfant Sauvage*. She plays a young woman who has grown up isolated in the North Carolina backwoods, away from civilisation and other people, and who speaks a mysterious language of her own. Liam Neeson and Natasha Richardson are the anthropologist and psychologist who both want a bit of her – and, this being Hollywood, fall in love at the same time *(S) (T) (60933317)*.

12.05 Film **Le Confessional** (Robert Lapage 1995 Can/UK/Fr) Scenes from Alfred Hitchcock's 1953 Quebec-set thriller *I Confess (see below)* are interspaced with this offbeat mystery drama about a man who returns to the city for his father's funeral. When he learns that his brother has not appeared for the ceremony, he sets out to find him. With Lothaire Bluteau *(600263)*.

2.00 Film **I Confess** (Alfred Hitchock 1953 US). Hitch at his most ponderous and portentous – hindered by an almost static performance from *Montgomery Clift as the Quebec priest who* must either break his confessional vows or be *charged with a murder he did not commit.* Anne Baxter mops his brow, and Karl Malden is *the investigating cop (T) (171718)*.

3.45 Film **Strange Cargo** (Frank Borzage 1940 US). *Strange is the word, but it's a shame it's* scheduled so late because this is the sort of *ludicrous melodrama that Christmas was made* for. Clark Gable, freshly escaped from Devil's *Island penal colony, is helped by a furiously* emoting Joan Crawford, and hindered by criminals Peter Lorre and Paul Lukas. *And, in the* middle of all this, up pops Ian Hunter as the *Messiah. Oh, yes (705640). To 5.45am.*

CHANNEL5

6.00 Dappledown Farm *(R) (7787775)*. **6.30** The Wind in the Willows *(63307620)*. **6.50** Mr Men and Little Miss *(S) (30278713)*. **7.00** Wimzie's House *(4859733)*. **7.30** Alvin and the Chipmunks *(9609030)*. **8.00** Havakazoo *(R) (S) (8453797)*. **8.30** Adventures of the Bush Patrol *(R) (S) (9803238)*.

9.00 Film **The Princess and the Goblin** (Jozsef Gemes 1992 UK/Hun). Animated tale based on a story by George MacDonald. When a young princess is forced to marry an ugly goblin, she finds help in the unlikely shape of an old woman and a miner's son. With the voices of Joss Ackland, Rik Mayall, Mollie Sugden, Claire Bloom and Peggy Mount *(8198292)*.

10.30 Stickin' Around (9908882). **11.00** Eco Warriors Special *(S) (4299862)*. **11.30** Wishbone *(R) (4290591)*. **12.00** The Bold and the Beautiful *(T) (5203274)*. **12.30** Family Affairs *(S) (T) (1252220)*. **1.00** 5 News Update *(S) (88594510)*.

1.05 Football Special. Channel 5, like others before them, has discovered that football is a great way into the ratings game, although its coverage, spear-headed by the tiringly excitable Jonathan Pearce, has some way to go yet. Anyhow, Pearce and Steve Scott present these "highlights" (actually they take nearly five hours; it wasn't that good) from Channel 5's soccer coverage from 1997. From the scene of this season's most extraordinary game – Tromso, where Chelsea played in a snowstorm – *there are stories and action from the World Cup exploits of England* (you might remember C5 had the England v Poland rights), Scotland, Ireland, *and the European (mis)adventures of Arsenal,* Newcastle, Chelsea and Aston Villa *(63709152)*.

6.00 100 Per Cent. *The gameshow without a host.* Three contestants, playing in isolation, face 100 *general-knowledge questions. (S) (4415997).*

6.30 Family Affairs. All hell breaks loose as Annie *and Elsa face the terrible truth about Jack and* Maria's affair, especially when they realise that *they are the last to know. Tim and Holly share a passionate kiss (S) (T) (6830539).*

7.10 Film **Gone with the Wind** (Victor Fleming 1939 US). See *The Film*, above *(T) (65028201)*.

11.10 Lexx – the Dark Zone Stories. Last of this amiably gory German-Canadian sci-fi series. Kai will die without some proto-blood *(2603607)*.

1.00 Film **The Happy Hooker** (Nicholas Sgarro 1975 US). Totally sanitised screen version of New York brothel-keeper Xaviera Hollander's memoirs. Lyn Redgrave looks cut adrift amid a no-name cast in the lead role *(5785992)*.

2.50 Film **Smoke Signal** (Jerry Hopper 1955 US). Frontier drama set in New Mexico Territory in 1852 (but filmed in the Grand Canyon – and handsomely, too), in which a small replacement cavalry detachment ride into their new post to find it under attack by Ute Indians. Only nine of the original complement survive and, realising that the Indians will attack again, are forced to escape downriver on flatboats. Dana Andrew leads the way *(62737599)*.

4.20 Film **The Plough and the Stars** (John Ford 1937 US). Ford's disappointingly stagey adap*tation of Sean O'Casey's play about the 1916* Easter Rising in Dublin. Preston Foster is the *revolutionary and Barbara Stanwyck the wife* who'd rather he didn't go and mix it up with the *British Army (26607331).*

5.30 Per Cent (S) *(7744060)*. *To 6.00am.*

RADIO

Radio 1

(97.6-99.8MHz FM)
9.00 Best Mayo Radio Show. **12.00** Take Three. **1.00** Roadshow Summer Tour. **2.00** Clive Warren. **6.00** Essential 97. **9.00** Judge Jules **11.00** Westwood **2.00** One in the Jungle. **4.00 - 6.00** Charlie Jordan

Radio 2

(88-90.2MHz FM)
6.00 Alex Lester **7.30** Wake Up to Wogan. **9.30** Ken Bruce. **12.00** Alan Freeman. **2.30** Christmas Lifestyles **3.00** Goon Show **3.30** Richard Allinson. **5.00** John Dunn. **7.00** Hubert Gregg. **7.30** Friday Night Is Music Night. **9.15** Dracula **9.30** Listen to the Band. **10.00** And Is It True? **11.00** Bob Harris. **1.00** Charles Nove. **4.00 - 6.00** Lale Sharma.

Radio 3

(90.2-92.4MHz FM)
6.00 On Air.
9.00 *Morning Collection.*
10.00 Musical Encounters
12.00 Composers of the Week: British Light Music.
1.00 The Radio 3 Lunchtime Concert.
2.00 The BBC Archive.
3.55 Nursery Notions.
4.00 Music Restored.
4.45 Turns of the Century.
5.00 In Repertory (R)
6.00 Schubert Songbook. (R)
6.15 *In Country Churches.*
7.00 Performance on 3.
8.45 Haydn and Bartok.
9.45 Postscript.
10.00 Hear and Now.
11.30 Composer *of the Week: Prokofiev*
12.30 Kenton's Innovations (R)
1.00 - 6.55 Through the Night.

Radio 4

(92.4-94.6MHz FM)
6.00 News Briefing.
6.10 Farming Today.
6.25 Prayer for the Day.
6.30 *On Your Farm.*
6.55 Weather.
7.00 Today.
8.45 The Nation's Favourite Poems.
9.05 Desert Island Discs.
9.45 Bon Appetit. *See Choice*
10.00 News; Writers' France
10.30 Cold Turkey with Dan and Nick.
11.00 Foul Play.
11.30 The Pickwick Papers.
12.00 News; Trumpton Riots Again
12.25 *The Food Programme.*
12.55 Weather.
1.00 The World at One.
1.40 The Archers.
1.55 Shipping Forecast.
2.00 News. Classic Serial: Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator
3.00 News; An Artist in Sound (R)
3.30 An Artist *in Sound. (R)*
4.00 News.
4.05 Calling to Swans. *See Choice*
4.30 *Batteries Not Included.*
4.45 Short Story: Remarkable Rocket.
5.00 PM.
5.50 Shipping Forecast
5.55 Weather.
6.00 Six O'Clock News.
6.15 Singular Women. (R)
6.30 Richard Baron General Practitioner
7.00 News.
7.05 The Archers.
7.20 Pick of the Year
8.05 *Natural Consequences*
8.50 Second to None
9.15 Letter from America.
9.30 *The Pickwick Papers.*
9.59 Weather
10.00 The World Tonight Special Debate.
10.45 Book at Bedtime: *Playback*
11.00 Week Ending. A Christmas panto special.
11.25 Tea Junction
11.45 Singular Women (R)
12.00 *News.*
12.30 The Late Book: Christmastime at the End of the Road.
12.48 *Shipping Forecast*
1.00 As World Service.
5.50 Inshore Forecast
5.55 - 6.00 Shipping Forecast

Radio 4 LW

(198kHz)
10.00 News. An Act of Worship **10.15 - 10.30** On This Day.

Radio 5 Live

(693, 909kHz MW)
6.00 Brief Lives 97. **7.00** The Breakfast Programme. **9.00** Nicky Campbell. **11.00** Sport on Five. **7.00** The Sa-O-Sa. **9.00** Extra Time. **10.00** Paper Talk **11.00** News Extra. **11.30** Tales of the Turf **12.00** After Hours **2.00** Up All Night **5.00 - 6.00** Spotlight 97

Classic FM

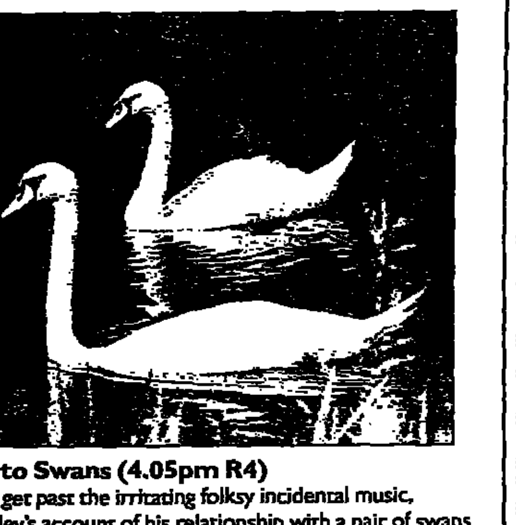
(100.0-101.9MHz FM)
6.00 Alan Mann **9.00** Nick Bailey **12.00** Luciano Pavarotti in Mostar **1.00** Request Hour **2.00** Beauty and the Beast **3.30** Margaret Howard. **6.00** Jussi and Friends. **8.00** Evening Concert. **10.00** Michael Mappin **2.00** Jussi and Friends **4.00 - 6.00** Sally Peterson.

Virgin Radio

(1215, 1197-1260kHz MW 105.8MHz FM)
6.00 Nick Abbot **10.00** Robin Banks / Graham Dene **2.00** Nicky Horne **6.00** Carmin Jones **10.00** Richard Porter **2.00 - 6.00** Howard Pearce

World Service

(198kHz LW)
1.00 Newsdesk. **1.30** *Foul Play* **2.00** Newsday **2.30** People and Politics. **3.00** World News **3.05** World Business Report **3.30** Science in Action **4.00** Newsdesk. **4.15** Sports Roundup **4.30** Weekend The World Today (LW, SW 5875) **4.45** On the Shelf: High Spirits (LW and SW 5875kHz only) **5.00** Newsdesk **5.30** Outlook **5.55 - 6.00** Spotlight



Calling to Swans (4.05pm R4)
If you can get past the irritating folksy incidental music, Jim Crumley's account of his relationship with a pair of swans *living on a highland loch is fascinating.* It's a tale of trust built up over years, and disillusionment, when the male drove out his mate and replaced her with a younger swan. Earlier, there is **Bon Appetit (9.45am R4)** Kevin Connolly's four-part examination of the French attitude to food –why do they eat *bits of animals* that the British would never touch?

SATELLITE/CABLE

Sense and Sensibility (9pm Sky Movies Screen 1)
Is there nothing Emma Thompson can't do? After winning a *Best Actress Oscar for Howards End*, she went on to scoop the Best Adapted Screenplay gong for her beautifully-realised version of Jane Austen's tale of two sisters' (Thompson and Kate Winslet) quest for love. Ang Lee, an unexpected but inspired choice, directs with delicacy in this satellite premiere.

Sky Movies Screen 1

6.10 *Desert Bloom (1986) (73588133)* **8.00** Annie, a Royal Adventure! (1995) *(55601249)* **9.40** Cutthroat Island (1995) *(58697626)* **11.40** While You Were Sleeping (1995) *(17892442)* **1.25** Annie, a Royal Adventure! (1995) *(2987510)* **2.55** Apollo 13 (1995) *(23589626)* **5.15** While You Were Sleeping (1995) *(14107713)* **7.00** *Cutthroat Island (1995) (90607)* **9.00** Sense and Sensibility (1995) See *Choice (34310591)*. **11.20** The Movie Show *(518442)* **11.50** Elke (1995) *(979607)* **1.35** The Forgotten *One (1990) (673756)* **3.15 - 6.00** Castle Freak (1994) *(69782517)*

Sky Movies Screen 2

6.00 The Invisible Man Returns* (1940) *(4019881)*. **7.25** An American Tail (1986) *(7948423)*. **8.50** A Troll in Central Park (1994) *(8808591)* **10.10** Batman Forever (1995) *(67895210)* **12.10** The War (1994) *(774862)* **2.10** Free Willy 2: the Adventure Home (1995) *(4707941)*. **3.50** Fluke (1995) *(696065)* **5.30** Batman Forever (1995) *(47423)* **7.30** UK Top Ten *(55391)* **8.00** Crimson Tide (1995) *(17713)* ***10.00*** *Sudden Death (1995) (874269)* **11.50** Darkman III: Die, Darkman, Die (1996) *(507423)* **1.20** Blessed Assurance (1996) *(671263)* **2.55** Cold Dog Soup (1990) *(1615553)* **4.25 - 6.00** The Old Curiosity Shop (1984) *(246602)*

Sky Movies Gold

4.00 ET the Extra-Terrestrial (1982) *(9454539)* **6.00** Bigfoot and the Hendersons (1987) *(4690046)* **8.00** Uncle Buck (1989) *(4691591)* **10.00** The Pope of Greenwich Village (1984) *(8500862)* **12.00** The Principal (1987) *(6739485)* **1.50** *Thank God It's Friday (1978) (24995196)* **3.20** Uncle Buck (1989) *(5576824)* **4.55** Close()

Bravo

8.00 The A-Team *(4585959)*. **9.00** *Tour of Duty (4598423)* **10.00** Red Shoe Diaries *(6742065)* **10.30** Italian Stripping Housewives *(8605779)* **10.45 Film:** *Phoenix the Warrior* (1988) *(80390682)* **12.35** Leslie Nielsen's Unbalanced World - Short *(1874263)* **12.45** Beverly Hills Bordello *(5153263)* **1.15** Red Shoe Diaries *(5150176)* **1.45** Italian Stripping Housewives *(1427973?)* **2.00** Beverly Hills Bordello *(9434981)* **2.30 Film:** *Rambo III (1988) (1492466)* **4.20** Leslie Nielsen's Unbalanced World - Short *(85523060)* **4.30** Family Dog *(7536355)* **5.00 - 6.00** Starsky and Hutch *(4102737)*

Discovery Channel

4.00 Bush Tucker Man *(3585201)* **4.30** Flightline *(3514713)* **5.00** Ancient Warriors *(8732171)* **5.30** Beyond 2000 *(3505065)* **6.00** Untamed Amazonia *(9056423)* **7.00** Arthur C Clarke's Mysterious World *(8729607)* **7.30** Disaster *(3515442)* **8.00** Crocodile Dundee *(4581133)* **9.00** Crocodile Dundee *(1552171)* **9.30** Crocodile Dundee *(9068368)*. **10.00** Crocodile Dundee *(6756535)* **10.30** Crocodile Dundee *(8740011)* **12.00** Sunday Drivers *(3606069)* **1.00** Disaster *(8186094)* **1.30** Beyond 2000 *(9573331)* **2.00** Close()

Sky 1

6.00 Morning Glory *(631171)* **9.00** Hotel *(10046)* **10.00** Another World *(99794)*. **11.00** Days of Our Lives *(79930)* **12.00** The Oprah Winfrey Show - Elton John *(72026)* **1.00** Geraldo *(58046)* **2.00** Sally Jessy Raphael *(77084)* **3.00** Jenny Jones *(58572)* **4.00** Oprah Winfrey *(77607)* **5.00** Star Trek: Voyager *(2355)*. **6.00** Married with Children *(3065)* **6.30** Married with Children *(3317)* **7.00** The Simpsons *(3084)* **7.30** Real TV *(2201)*. **8.00** Highlander *(97959)* **9.00** Walker, Texas Ranger *(56743)* **10.00** Walker, *Texas Ranger (51210)* **11.00** *Star Trek* Voyager *(90423)* **12.00** Late Show with David Letterman *(25911)* **1.00** In the Heat of the Night *(26621)* **2.00 - 7.00** Long Play *(3379843)*

Sky Sports 1

7.00 Futbol Mundial *(49713)* **7.30** World Wrestling Federation Superstars *(68688)*. **8.30** Knockouts of '97 *(49249)* **9.00** Racing News *(23301)* **9.30** Aerobics - Oz Style *(67133)* **10.00** Golf Extra - How the Ryder Cup Was Won *(972930)* **1.00** Knockouts of '97 *(48084)* **1.30** Rafting *(54572)* **2.30** *NHL Power Week (80152)* **3.30** Knockouts of '97 *(4607)* **4.00** Ford Football Special Aston Villa v Spurs *(3497423)* **7.30** Sky Sports Centre *(3355)* **8.00** NBA Basketball Boston Celtic v Charlotte Hornets *(39959)*. **10.00** Ford Football Special Aston Villa v Spurs *(29107)* **12.00** Sky Sports Centre *(89466)* **12.30** World Wrestling Federation Raw *(55756)*. **2.30** Ford Football Special Aston Villa v Spurs *(65379)*. **4.30** *Rebel Sports (42076)* **5.30 - 6.00** Sky Sports Centre *(80195)*

Sky Sports 2

7.00 Aerobics *(9302626)* **7.30** Body-Building *(9381133)* **8.00** Racing News *([illegible])* **8.30** *Celebrity Tennis* *([illegible])* **9.30** Trans World Sport *([illegible])* **10.30** Futbol Mundial *([illegible])* **11.00** F1 Powerboat *([illegible])* **11.30** Football *(3921978)*. **2.30** Futbol Mundial *(6308084)*. **3.00** [illegible] *(2766442)* **3.30** Ice Skating [illegible] *(6370572)* **6.00** Cricket *(2676404)*. **10.00** Knockouts of '97 *(5128404)*. **10.30** High 5 *(5137152)*. **11.00** Trans World Sport *(9388046)* **12.00** Knockouts of '97 *(6352602)*. **12.30** Football League *(2740701)*. **2.30** Sports Centre *(5671485)* **3.00** Marlin Fishing *(6185843)* **5.00 - 6.00** *Rafting (6949185)*

Sky Sports 3

12.00 Cricket *(38173862)* **4.00** World of Sailing *(28375423)* **4.30** Powerboat and Jet Ski World *(28371607)*. **5.00** NHL *Power Week (28134602)*. **6.00** Extreme Sport *(28352572)*. **6.30** High 5 *(28376152)*. **7.00** Trans World Sport *(56378688)*. **8.00** *Football League* Reading v West Bromwich *(56381152)* **10.00** WWF *(35398249)* **12.00** Close.

Eurosport

7.30 Equestrianism *(86084)*. **8.30** Diving *(34317)*. **9.00** Cycling *(64210)* **11.00** Football: World Cup Legends *(39336)*. **12.00** Touring Cars *(75152)*. **1.00** Strength *(51572)*. **2.00** Trickshot *(32046)*. **4.00** Motorsport Magazine *(17249)*. **5.00** Martial Arts *(2997)*. **6.00** Stock Car Racing *(71336)* **7.00** Football *(37591)*. **8.00** Motorcycling *(53539)*. **9.00** Boxing *(33775)* **10.00** Sumo *(36862)*. **11.00** Snooker *(12775)*. **12.30** Close.

UK Gold

7.00 The Sullivans *(4039607)*. **7.35** Neighbours *(4815573)*. **8.00** Crossroads *(2980881)*. **8.25** *EastEnders (6537046)*. **9.00** The Bill *(4517607)*. **9.35 Film:** Great Expectations* (1946) *(27195133)*. **11.35** 'Allo 'Allo! *(1852626)*. **12.35** Till Death Us Do Part *(6189877)*. **1.35** In Sickness and in Health *(4941626)* **2.15** The Liver Birds *(7429997)*. **3.10** Whatever Happened to the Likely Lads? *(3818171)*. **4.10** Pop Profile *(95642539)*. **4.15** Save the Children *(38335404)* **5.20** The Two Ronnies *(4648881)*. **6.20** In *Sickness and in Health (5189779)* **7.00** Dad's Army *(6926249)* **7.40** A Word with All *(9288125)* **7.50** Rising Damp *(8534423)* **8.20** Keeping Up Appearances *(7191715)* **9.00** Only Fools and Horses *(53546591)* **10.50** Blackadder II *(5284152)*. **11.30** The Bill *(9417626)* **12.05 Film:** The Eagle Has Landed (1976) *(70751553)*. **2.40 - 7.00** Shopping at Night *(72646114)*.

Living

6.00 Tiny Living *(2059864)*. **9.00** Lesley's Christmas Countdown *(5776846)*. **9.30** Gordon Elliott *(6338997)* **10.10** Jerry Springer *(9825084)* **11.00** Young and the Restless *(7628220)*. **11.55** Mysteries, Magic and Miracles *(49848997)*. **12.25** Jimmy's *(7908959)*. **1.00** Cheap Chic *(6011510)*. **1.30** Ready Steady Cook *(3886220)*. **2.05** Hart to Hart *(2345152)* **3.00** Could It Be a Miracle? *(95271423)* **4.10** Jerry Springer *(4915065)*. **5.00** Rolonda *(4427539)*. **5.50** Cheap Chic *(3483862)*. **6.20** Ready, Steady, Cook *(1648046)*. **7.00** Rescue 911 *(9433046)*. **7.30** Mysteries, Magic and Miracles *(7453572)*. **8.00** Jerry Springer *(4695317)*. **9.00 Film:** Kate's Secret (1985) *(4698404)*. **11.00** The Sex Zone *(6005959)*. **12.00** Close.

Live TV

6.00 Living Room Legends **6.30** Agony **7.00** *Dial-a-Doc* **7.15** *Nation LIVE* **7.30** Fashion **8.00** Agony **8.30** Living Room Legends **9.00** Love Story **9.15** Nation LIVE **9.30** Why Files? **10.00** Lie Detector **10.30** Dial-a-Doc **10.45** Love Story **11.00** Revelations **11.30** Fate and Fortune **12.00** Why Files? **12.30** Revelations **1.00** Lie Detector **1.30** Agony **2.00** *Fashion Show* **2.30** *Revelations* **3.00** Fate and Fortune **3.30** Dial-a-Doc **4.00** Living Room Legends **4.30** Fashion Show **5.00** Agony **5.30** Lie Detector **6.00** Living Room **6.30** Sport Live **7.00** Fashion **7.30** Agony **8.00** Lie Detector **8.30** Living Room **9.00** Why Files? **9.30** Fashion **10.00** Topless Darts: Sport Live **10.30** Agony **11.00** Topless Darts: Sex **11.30** Exotica Erotica **12.30** Pleasure Dome **1.00** Private Dancer **1.30** Sex Show **2.00** Exotica **3.00** *Private Dancer* **3.30** Sex Show **4.00** Exotica **5.00** Sports Live **5.30 - 6.00** Home Shopping

VARIATIONS

Anglia

As Carlton except: **1.20** Film: 10 *(52050379)*. **3.30** Collins and Maconie's Movie Club *(57465669)*. **3.55** Sound Bites *(95675824)*. **4.10** Comedy Central *(5266927)*. **5.05** Coronation Street *(3455027)*. **5.55** ITN Morning News *(7884447)*.

Central

As Carlton except: **5.40** News; Weather *(194648)*. **5.55** Morning News *(7884447)*.

HTV Wales

As Carlton except: **1.20** News; Weather *(33435930)*. **8.50** News *(221442)*. **1.20** Film: 10 *(52050379)*. **3.30** Collins and Maconie's Movie Club *(57465669)*. **3.55** Sound Bites *(95675824)* **4.10** Comedy Central *(5266927)*. **5.05** Coronation Street *(3455027)* **5.55** News *(7884447)*.

Meridian

As Carlton except: **1.20** Film: 10 *(52050379)*. **3.30** Collins and Maconie's Movie Club *(57465669)* **3.55** Sound Bites (95675824). **4.10** Comedy *Central (5266927)*. ***5.05*** *Look* and Cook *(3455027)*. **5.55** ITN Morning News *(7884447)*.

Westcountry

As Carlton except: **8.50** ITN News; Weather *(221442)*. **1.20** Film: 10 *(52050379)*. **3.30** Collins and Maconie's Movie Club *(57465669)*. **3.55** Sound Bites *(95675824)*. **4.10** Comedy Central *(5266927)*. **5.05** Coronation Street *(3455027)*. **5.55** ITN Morning News *(7884447)*.

Yorkshire/North East

As Carlton except: **1.20** News *(33435930)* **8.50** News *(221442)*. **3.35** The Gramophone Awards *(778466)*. **5.55** ITN Morning News *(7884447)*.

S4C

As Channel 4 except: **11.15** Ant and Dec's Geordie Christmas *(1658355)* **12.00** Smudge *(83323)*. **12.30** Slot Meithrin. Slici a Slac a Pingu *(31355)*. **1.00** Channel 4 Racing from *Kempton Park and Leopardstown (63588249)*. **3.20** Film: Ebbie *(45071648)*. **5.00** 5Pump: Noc Noc *(5046)*. **5.30** 5Pump: Gogs *(394666)*. **5.40** Crefyddau'r Byd Wedi Eu Hanimeiddio *(713607)*. **6.00** *Newyddion 6 (173591)*. **6.05** Heno (581210). **7.00** Licyris Olsorts *(3775)*. **8.00** Penblwydd Hapus *(4930)*. **8.30** Cefn Gwlad (58249). **9.30** Newyddion *(834591)*. **9.45** Garej Nadolig *(198201)*. **10.00** *Brookside (76688)*. **11.30** Jo Brand Burns Rubber *(87355)*. **12.30** Film: Safe *(56477737)*. **2.40** Film: Love at First Bite *(714486)*. **4.25** Close

Numbers in brackets are VideoPlus+® Codes (T) = Teletext Subtitles (S) = Stereo

TV Guide by Gerard Gilbert

Hapless Everton fear a seasonal stuffing at rampant United

Christmas crackers or Boxing Day stuffings, football leaves the heaving table today for the start of the festive programme that usually dictates whether teams truly have a happy new year. *Guy Hodgson* looks at the top matches.

If anything blighted Alex Ferguson's Christmas Day it was the presumption that the title is already destined for Old Trafford. "If the players start thinking it's won," the Manchester United manager said, "we'll have problems."

The statistics would appear to corroborate Ferguson's caution. Over the last 25 years only 11 teams leading the top division on Christmas Day have won the championship and one club has twice been four points clear and fallen back. United were the flattering front-runners in 1971-2 and 1985-6 and what is their lead today? Four points.

On that latter occasion the red Boxing Day swagger was wiped away by Everton, who also happen to be today's opponents. But while comparisons could just about be drawn with the United of today and 12 years ago, no-one with an ounce of compassion would hold up Goodison past and present for scrutiny.

The team that beat United 3-1 that day were the reigning champions and included Gary Lineker, Trevor Steven and Kevin Sheedy to name but three of a marvellous side and you do not have to be an Everton supporter to sigh nostalgically when you see the current players. The manager, Howard Kendall, probably does every time he takes out his pencil and starts writing out the line-up.

Other numbers hardly come to Everton's rescue today. They have won only one of their last six matches at United and managed to squander a two-goal lead on their last visit. They are second bottom and the only way they are scoring is through Gary Speed penalties.

United, meanwhile, have won their last five Premiership matches and even the Newcastle United-supporting Prime Minister, Tony Blair, took off his black and white striped glasses at the weekend to describe them as "one of the great sides of the century". Not that a politician would ever resort to exaggeration.

It is Ryan Giggs who is making grand claims seem plausible at the moment. Injury has hamstrung his progress for three seasons, but fully-fit again he looks capable of achieving what was promised in his salad days. "What you are seeing now is the fulfilment of that potential," Ferguson said. "On Sunday at Newcastle, Ryan was the most accomplished player on the pitch, a man of real class. His penetration catches teams."

It certainly did against Newcastle and Aston Villa and suddenly a period from 30 November that was full of potential pitfalls (Blackburn home, Liverpool and Newcastle away) has seen United forge ahead. "We've got to keep winning," Ferguson said. "If you can come out of December in front then you're in a good position."

No one would describe Tottenham's position (18th) as good and you suspect the Yuletide euphoria in N17 at Jürgen Klinsmann's return had its edge knocked off by the news that the German captain will be in Italy celebrating Christmas with his family rather than turning out today against Aston Villa.

His registration is through, as far as we know he is healthy and he will be no more match-fit today than he will against Arsenal on Sunday, his signalled return. You did not have to receive a dose of cynicism in your stocking to wonder at his commitment.

You can guarantee there will be no such reluctance from Brad Friedel. The 26-year-old American goalkeeper has had his attempts to play in the Premiership stymied so often you suspect he would turn out on his wedding day just to sit on the substitutes' bench. His chance for something better might come for Liverpool against Leeds at Anfield.

This time last year Liverpool led Manchester United by five points and it is difficult to find anyone on Merseyside who does not dump a large proportion of the blame for last spring's slump at David James' door. Even a steady season to date has not restored the faith and it is safe to say there will not be riots in the streets of Anfield if Friedel replaces "Calamity" today.

"I want to prove wrong people back home who don't believe it's possible for an American to make a living from soccer in Europe," Friedel said. Frankly after persuading the authorities, who turned down applications from Newcastle, Sunderland and Southampton for his work permit, his compatriots would appear to be the easy bit.

Kasey Keller is a Yank who has already courted success in the country of King Arthur but it will take a lot of New World optimism to imagine Leicester prevailing at Arsenal today. They have not won at Highbury since September 1973 and as their current run is only two wins in their last 10 League matches the portents are not promising.

"People talk about us as having established ourselves in the Premiership," the Leicester manager, Martin O'Neill, said. "It's a big compliment, but also dangerous. As soon as we start thinking we've made it we'll find ourselves getting the biggest shock of our lives."

As Barnsley have done, although the trip to Bolton today harks back to last season's successful First Division campaign and a 2-2 draw at Burnden Park. The other promoted team, Crystal Palace, will hope for their first home win of the season against Southampton while Chelsea have the memory of last season's 4-2 defeat by Wimbledon to prick any complacency at Stamford Bridge.

The most intriguing match of the day might come at Hillsborough, however, where home supporters will be able to see whether Ron Atkinson's return heralded a genuine improvement or a 19-day wonder. Sheffield Wednesday meet second-placed Blackburn with a previous meeting also to the forefront, the 7-2 thrashing at Ewood Park in August.

INSIDE

'I've always been against players drinking, and I'm always thinking of ways of getting a team that doesn't drink. Eventually that will happen'

Alex Ferguson has a seasonal message for Glenn Moore Page 22

England's Clare Connor practises in Madras on Christmas Eve Photograph: Allsport

Christmas put on hold by England's cricketing women

After three weeks of being hauled around India when half asleep, the England women's cricket team take on New Zealand today for a place in the World Cup final. Far from being jaded or homesick the side are relishing their big Boxing Day. *Pete Davies* reports from Madras

The England women's cricket team has played eight matches in the past 20 days, and spent 10 of the other 12 days travelling. There has been one seven-hour train journey, four six-hour bus rides – three of them through the night – and on Tuesday an alarm call at 3.30am (their fifth pre-dawn start) got them up for a 6.30am flight from Delhi to Madras that was then delayed until midday.

Karen Smithies, the captain, said: "I hope people know what we've been through. We've kept going because we've had to, but I think when we get home we'll all completely collapse."

The past two days of rest and practice before today's semi final with New Zealand, have therefore been an unfamiliar luxury, tempered only by thoughts of family at home. Clare Connor, the left-arm off-spinner, summed it up when saying: "In our house Christmas is always the same. At any time of day you know exactly what they'll be doing. It's hard not to think about it."

Twenty-one years old, Connor is a student of English at Manchester University. She has toured in India and Zimbabwe before, and been twice to Romania to work in orphanages, but she confessed to being more homesick this time than she expected. News of her little brother decorating the tree touched a nerve – but, on the other hand, she said simply: "Everything else fades into insignificance when cricket's around."

England are sternly focused on today's game. They know it will be different to anything that has gone before: the prize is a place in the final against Australia at Eden Gardens in Calcutta on Monday and Smithies said: "We'll be up for it big time. If anybody isn't, what are they doing here?"

New Zealand, beaten by England in the final at Lord's four years ago, are a quality side. In Debbie Hockley, they have the highest run-scorer in the world. Hockley's 4,521 runs in international competition include two centuries here, and she strikes the ball with such power that in England 18 months ago, she broke three English fingers.

On that tour, New Zealand won a one-day series 3-0, but have lost players since then, while England are very much better prepared, and can bat right through the order. Confident that players like Charlotte Edwards and Jan Brittin can score runs all day, England believe that if Hockley is contained, the game is theirs.

Conditions are promising. After the dense and chilly fogs of Delhi and Chandighar, Madras offers welcome sunshine, with nodding palm trees and warmth in the high 20s. The MA Chidambaram Stadium is an imposing arena with a flat, rock-hard batters' track and an immaculate outfield. England have trained there twice, clouting the ball so hard in the nets that four have been lost over the wall amid the barefoot boys who crowd to watch their every move.

In short, with all the players fit and well, England have come through their debilitating itinerary in remarkably good shape. Today's game is a massive challenge, and promises to be enthralling, but whatever the outcome no one should doubt that the side have given their all.

It has been especially hard for the wicketkeeper, Jan Cassar, who has missed not only Christmas, but also a birthday at home on Christmas Eve. She spoke for the squad, however, when she said: "Cricket is more important than Christmas right now. Christmas can wait, because we all want this so badly. If we lose we'll be distraught. We've won the World Cup before, and there's nothing that compares to it. I've never felt anything like it, and I want to feel that feeling again."

Spare a thought, then, for these women of England doing battle far from home on Boxing Day.

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A long-suffering lifestyle for the wife on the ocean waves

Yesterday's festivities provided some rare moments of respite for the crews, and family, of sailing's Whitbread Round the World Race. But as *Nicki Dalton*, the wife of Merit Cup skipper Grant, says the work is never really done for the travelling community who live for the competition.

The Christmas present we most wanted, a win for Merit Cup on the third leg from Fremantle, did not arrive, but perhaps it is just delayed and will be waiting for us when we, and Grant, get home to Auckland early in the New Year. Last time his arrival in New Zealand Endeavour was one of the most fantastic moments I can remember in yacht racing.

At least on Christmas Day we are able to forget the race for an hour or two. Grant's sister, her husband and family live in Sydney so we could not only spend the day with them and their children, but take time to open the presents in the morning then have the whole crew round for an Australian Christmas barbecue in the afternoon. Our two had already sent notes to Santa telling him not to send the presents down the chimney at home because they would be away.

But normally we are concentrating the whole time on the race. It starts with putting the project together and finding the finance. In some ways that is even more nerve-wracking than the race itself.

Once the project is under way it seems to be a 24-hour job, especially as we are working with people in different countries around the world, and then when it is on, although it is the time you have been looking forward to, there are the tortures known as the six-hourly skeds. These are position reports sent out by the race organisation in England.

We, that is myself and the other wives and shore crew, get really involved in it and these reports can make a huge difference to your day. You can have a good report showing position gained or maintained and you are having a good day. But six hours later it might be a bad one and then everything turns bad and your stomach churns until there is a better one.

It is hard to take your mind off it, though having to look after the children helps. But I never worry that he is away or that he is in danger. I would be more worried if he were driving a car the same distance than I would about sailing.

Before the finish in Sydney I thought that, on a scale of one to 10, our Christmas would score 12 if there was a win, eight if we were second or third, and anything below that would be five downwards. This is Grant's fifth Whitbread, my fourth, so we all know the way things work by now and children are remarkably adaptable.

My first race we were just going out together, the second we were married, the third we had one child, Eloise, and now, with Mack, we have two. Of course their arrival was planned to fit in with Whitbread schedules. The Shoebridges and Quilters are the same because none of us wanted to do the Whitbread with a brand new baby, nor did we want to stay at home pregnant. It has worked out well, the children get on well together, and a four-year gap seems quite good.

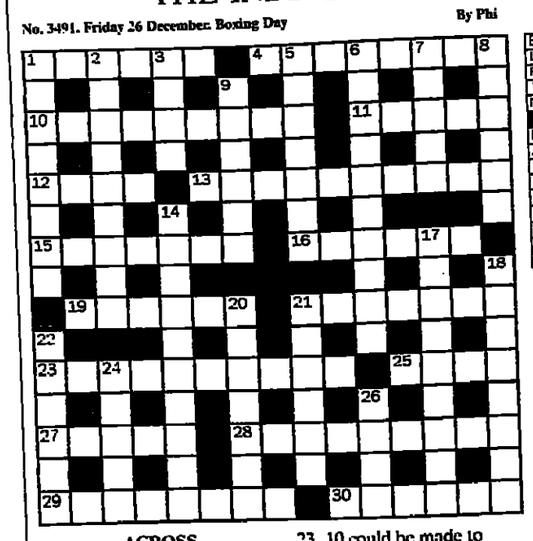
And would I swap this for a normal, nine to five, domestic easy of life? No. I have great admiration for all the guys, and that includes the shore crew, because I see just how hard they work. They go to great lengths to perfect everything they are doing and I have a lot of respect for that effort. But I cannot think of anything I would hate to do more than a leg of the Whitbread Race in a W60, even though I love the race.

My mother still wonders when Grant is going to get what she thinks would be a proper job, but this is his job, this is what he does for a living. I absolutely love the lifestyle. I really enjoy the closeness of the racing, and I love that he is doing something he is passionate about. I really enjoy the travel and meeting people from all over the world.

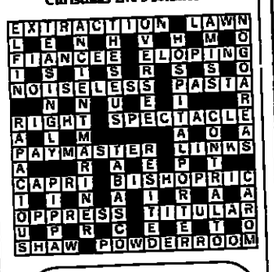
I am not really a strongly social person, but the environment of this community as it travels together is fantastic. Trying to watch the fleet come into Auckland and not be part of it would be sheer torture. Which reminds me, I have a house to get ready.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3491. Friday 26 December: Boxing Day By Phi



Christmas Eve's solution



ACROSS

1 This girl's writing the answers where? (6)
4 Sophisticated brand adopted by upper-class favourite (2-6)
10 Description of locality where sickly pale man hangs around church (9)
11 East European carrying round 10 (5)
12 10's vegetable (4)
13 Munch's heart is in "The Scream", recreated for 10 (10)
15 English stage worker looking smart (7)
16 A composer, God willing, or a cataloguer of Mozart, in short (6)
19 A party recalled lust, perhaps, for a beautiful boy (6)
21 One who decides the role of the colonist? (7)
23 10 could be made to match Helen (10)
25 Donkey will eat one in the state found (2,2)
27 A stand backed by fabulous story-teller (5)
28 Creature to be ardent in 10 (9)
29 Well-adjusted agency worker made a mistake, we hear (8)
30 Woodworker noticed you being vulgar (6)

DOWN

1 Under compulsion, drunkenly plied me with a drop of lager (8)
2 Sad mail from 10 (9)
3 10 - one extremely reduced (4)
5 Punctured support to give way, almost (7)
6 Substantial Scottish river in 10 (10)
7 Punishment heartless Karenin rejected (5)
8 The wild party – not good as a concept (6)
9 Vehicle entering Derby, say (or another 10) (6)
14 Storehouse with necessary food in 10 (10)
17 Surely bay is polluted in 10 (9)
18 Captive King is one incarcerated by Prince (8)
20 Spy once collapsed in a fainting fit (7)
21 Parsimonious hypocritical talk found within confines of Surrey (6)
22 Eighth officer commanding volunteer force's not losing heart (6)
24 Be unhappy about sun rising in 10 (5)
26 Field about to be surrounded by motoring organisation (4)

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